

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

A  
A  
0  
0  
1  
3  
3  
9  
3  
4  
8  
3



TWENTY YEARS IN PARIS









*Photo by Gervais, Paris.*

FERDINAND DE LESSEPS.

# TWENTY YEARS IN PARIS

BEING SOME RECOLLECTIONS  
OF A LITERARY LIFE

BY

ROBERT HARBOROUGH SHERARD

WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS

PHILADELPHIA  
GEORGE W. JACOBS & CO.  
PUBLISHERS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO  
MY GOOD FRIEND  
BEN WALMSLEY, OF BOWDON,  
THIS BOOK IS  
DEDICATED



## PREFATORY NOTE

**A**LTHOUGH, in the writing of it, this book has grown to a bulk which much surpasses that which was proposed at the outset, and although at all times that precept was kept in mind by which the severe Boileau proclaims it the great art of authorship to leave certain things unsaid, I am yet conscious as I read its pages over again that many people have been left unnamed who ought to have been named, and that many things have not been told which ought to have been told. I begin now to understand why it is that the writers of memoirs usually require several volumes for their narratives, and I can appreciate the truth of those words of the poet Baudelaire which Alphonse Daudet used often to quote in my hearing, "J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans."

The purpose of this explanatory note is to pay a collective tribute to those still living and to the memory of those who are dead, whose names are not recorded in friendship in these pages. To have written about all the distinguished people who by the privilege of their companionship and the graciousness of their hospitality have embellished the twenty years of my life in Paris would indeed have necessitated a record of many volumes.



For these Parisians are a great people who, in their carriage towards such strangers as know how to win their confidence, display an urbanity which indeed entitles them to claim for their city what Victor Hugo claimed, that it is the metropolis of the civilized world.

ROBERT H. SHERARD.

22, RUE GRÉVARIN, VERNON, (EURE), FRANCE.

*August 26, 1905.*

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
Victor Hugo—The Poet's Orchard—Sénat and his Collars—Hauteville House—The Ghost's Chair—Victor Hugo <i>en déshabillé</i> —His Last Years in Paris—Hero-Worship—The Poet and his Circle—Oscar Wilde and Victor Hugo—Victor Hugo and the Kings—His Last Autograph—His Public Testament . . . . .	I

## CHAPTER II

Crime and Punishment in France—The Leniency Displayed—The Sentimentality of the French Jury—Women and the Law—The Last Execution of a Woman in France—English and French Judges Compared—Maître Henri Robert and his Client—Joseph Aubert the Murderer—His Gascon Imagination—My Dealings with him—Aubert as a Postage-Stamp Collector—Aubert and the Insurance Clerk—The Stamp-Collector at Work . . . . .	16
---	----

## CHAPTER III

A Murderer's Kindness to Animals—Aubert at the Bull-fight—The Killing of Delahaef—"The Ayenbite of Inwyt"—Aubert's Trial—A Letter from the Iles du Salut—The Guiana Convict Settlement—The Devil's Island as an Earthly Paradise—French Presidents and the Death Penalty—Executions in Paris—The Court of Appeal and its Limitations—A Two-Edged Sword—The Case of Madame Groetzinger . . . . .	35
---	----

## CHAPTER IV

Alexandre Dumas <i>Fils</i> —Below Stairs in the Avenue de Villiers—Jean Richepin—"La Dame aux Camélias"—Flaubert and "Madame Bovary"—Guy de Maupassant—His Contempt for Literature—His Adulation of "Society"—Pessimism and Pessimists—The Norman Peasants—The Doctor and his Patient—De Maupassant's Illness—Dr. Blanche—His Absent-mindedness—De Maupassant's End . . . . .	52
--	----

## CHAPTER V

PAGE

Dumas <i>fils</i> and Dumas <i>père</i> —Dumas <i>fils</i> and Jules Verne—His Curiosity about Modern Paris—The Little Old Woman on Two Sticks—Margu�rite Li�nard at Home—A Midnight Conversation—The Observations of a Professional Beggar—Her Long Career—The Two Communards, Father and Son—Those that Disappear—The Dead who walk again . . . . .	66
---	----

## CHAPTER VI

The Modern "Cour des Miracles"—Bibi-la-Pur�e—A Survivor of the Middle Ages—His Mode of Life—His Friendship for Verlaine—His Last Impersonations—The Old Pole—A King Lear of the Gutter—The Adventures of Fenine—"La Revendication Individuelle"—Our Last Tryst—An Englishman in Paris—A Harboured Resentment—The Lady who called . . . . .	80
--	----

## CHAPTER VII

Baron Haussmann—His Home, Rue Boissy d'Anglas—A Pen-Portrait—The Writing of his Memoirs—His Acknowledgment of Napoleon's Share in his Work—His Opposition to the Franco-Prussian War—Bismarck's Rude Reception at Biarritz—The Real Cause of the War—Haussmann's Political Opinions—The Story of his Career—His Last Words—Paul D�roul�de and "La Revanche"—Old Paris	102
---	-----

## CHAPTER VIII

Ferdinand de Lesseps—On the Science of Antechambering—A Meeting of the Council—His Entire Confidence—Countess Kessler's Dinner Party—An Introduction to Magnard—De Lesseps to the Rescue—De Lesseps and the Poor Woman—The Report of his Death—A Stock-jobbing Man�uvre—A Drive to the Institute . . . . .	121
--	-----

## CHAPTER IX

Ferdinand de Lesseps—Three Years Later—How he heard of the Prosecution—His Resignation—His Wife's Courage—Widespread Sympathy—An Emperor's Letter—The Family's Losses—His Faith in Panama—His Dislike of Speculation . . . . .	137
--	-----

# CONTENTS

xi

## CHAPTER X

	PAGE
After the <i>Débâcle</i> —A Visit to La Chesnaye—A House of Mourning— How De Lesseps and his Family were beloved—The Lesseps Children and their Stepbrother Charles—Ferdinand de Lesseps portrayed—Renan's Tribute—Friends in Adversity—The Family at Luncheon—De Lesseps' Hope in Queen Victoria—My Last View of the Great Frenchman . . . . .	146

## CHAPTER XI

Monsieur Eiffel—Meetings with him in Elevated Spheres—His Visit to England—"A Magnificent Experience"—A Tribute to English Railways—The Firth of Forth Bridge—The Prince and the Engineer—The Eloquence of the Weather—"The Ascertained Average"—"Per £40,000 Life"—"The Most Remarkable Con- struction, bar none"—Edison and Eiffel—Eiffel's Modesty . . . . .	165
--	-----

## CHAPTER XII

Thomas Alva Edison—How I made his Acquaintance—A Characteristic Letter—The King's Envoyé—Count and Countess Edison—Edison's Opinion on Paris—A <i>Déjeuner</i> on the Eiffel Tower—The Simplicity of a Great Man—Edison on Electrocutation—"What is Electricity, after all?"—Edison and Mr. Gladstone—His Opinion on Eiffel, President Carnot, and Prime Minister Tirard . . . . .	174
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII

On Electrocutation—Edison's Disapproval prompts a Close Inquiry— Unanimous Condemnation by Leading Scientists—The Execu- tioner's View—Monsieur de Boer, Editor of <i>L'Electricité</i> —Monsieur Joubert's Experiments—Monsieur Cornu—"Science has no Place in the Shambles"—The Greatest Physiologist—Doctor d'Arsonval —A Scathing Denunciation—"Impracticable, Illogical, and Un- certain"—Death only Apparent—Electrical Asphyxia a Hideous Torture—Dr. Brown-Sequard's Opinion—Unanimous Accordance of German Scientists—American Indifference—How I missed Fame and Fortune . . . . .	193
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIV

Ernest Renan—On Future Punishment—The Genesis of the Idea—Its Development—The Belief of the Romans—The Inferno of the Buddhists—Ernest Renan as a Man—His Home in the Collège de France—A Man of Many Books—His Opinion on the Naturalists— Renan and Daudet . . . . .	204
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV

	PAGE
Louise Michel—My First Sight of Her—A Gathering of Anarchists— The Police Spies—Ferry and Aubertin—A Stolen Interview— Louise Michel's Appearance—Her Noble Character—My last Meeting with Her—Why She Refused Her Blessing—A Socialist at the Elysée—The Dress-Coat and the Scent—Jules Jouy . . . . .	218

## CHAPTER XVI

The Captains and the Kings—As Subjects for Journalism—"Carnot at the Elysée"—A Geographical Hotel—Dom Francis and his Dogs— "Envoyez Schneider"—Dom Pedro of Brazil—A Night Out with a King—Alexander of Servia—Leopold of Belgium—Oscar of Sweden—Macmahon in the Lock-up—Carnot and the Kangaroo— Adrien Marie—Queen Victoria's Kindness—Prince Dhuleep Singh —The Duchesse d'Uzès—General Boulanger . . . . .	235
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVII

President Carnot—A Garden Party at Fontainebleau—A Reception at the Elysée—A First Glimpse at Loubet—James G. Blaine—A Conversation at the Hôtel Binda—Blaine on Various Subjects— The Statesman and his Shadow—American Politicians—A Presidential Shooting Party—Carnot's First Cabinet—Carnot's Assassination—A Card from Casimir-Perier—Henri d'Orleans and Esterhazy—The Marquis de Flers and Comte d'Hérissou—On Paying Members of Parliament—General Boulanger . . . . .	256
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVIII

General Boulanger—His Love of Legality—The Duel with Floquet— The Cause of his Flight—A Newspaper "Beat"—the Marquis de Morés—His Quarrel with Constans—His Duel with Camille Dreyfus —A Trio of Princes—Married yet Single—Prince Murat and the Heiress—The Tailor's Widow and her Second Husband—A Prince amongst Cooks—The Gastronomical Director—General Tcheng- Ki-Tong—How he was lured back to China—A Sinister Suggestion —How a Reputation was Made . . . . .	284
---	-----

# CONTENTS

xiii

## CHAPTER XIX

	PAGE
The Foreign Correspondent—"News, not Soul-throb"—Yellow Journalism—A Cable from Keats—The Fascination of the Work—The Precariousness of Position—On collecting "Personals"—Shadowing a Millionaire—Jules Verne and Nelly Bly—My Friendship with Jules Verne—The Paris Correspondent to English Papers—The Fight against Anonymity—The Jealousy of Colleagues—A Remonstrance with Zola—American and English Correspondence Contrasted—Wanted, the Power of Prophecy—How I missed a High Honour . . . . .	305

## CHAPTER XX

Coquelin Cadet—Auguste Maquet—The "Ghost" of Alexandre Dumas—Why Bonvin Starved—Coquelin's Mother—Behind the Scenes at the Comédie Française—Mademoiselle Reichemberg—Jules Claretie—Sardou—Sarah Bernhardt and the Cat—Jules Lemaître and George Ohnet—Massenet—The Two Mounets—Coquelin the Elder—Parisian Painters—Melba's Débuts in Paris—Whistler . . . . .	324
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXI

Journalism in France—Contrasted with Journalism in England—Black-mailers—How a Provincial Journal was Founded—A Fighting Editor—"Les Feuilles Soumises"—Editing Provincial Journals—Charles Baudelaire as an Editor—The French Newspaper-reader—Serial Stories—The Masters of the Art—Drawing Pay—The Editor of <i>Le Figaro</i> —The Circulations Over a Million—And Under Five Hundred—How Dead Papers are kept Alive—Some Able Editors—Aurélien Scholl—Henri Rochefort . . . . .	350
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXII

The Quartier Latin—A Hopeless Mode of Existence—Victor Considérant—Jean Moréas—His Duel with Darzens—The Poet and the Washerwoman—The Fate of Maurice Rollinat—René Leclerc—Verlaine and Bibi-la-Purée—Laurent Tailhade—A Successful Phrase—Marcel Schwob and Hugues Rebell—Stephane Mallarmé—A Matrimonial Proposal—W. T. Peters—Stuart Merrill—Raoul Ponchon—Those who have Resisted—Paul Adam—Henri de Régnier—Maurice Barrés—Pierre Louys—The Writing of "Aphrodite"—The Regret of an Academician . . . . .	377
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXIII

	PAGE
Ernest Dowson—And the Moralists—The Catastrophe of his Life—His Pursuit of Pain—Why he came to me in Paris—How I First met him—The Poet and the Guardsman—His Delight in Self-Abasement—The Pathetic Promptings of Instinct—How I found him in London—He comes Home with me—The Distress of Two Poets—Ernest Dowson's Last Days—How Relief came to One Poet—The Coroner's Officer—"No Reasonable Cause"—His Obsequies . . . . .	397

## CHAPTER XXIV

Oscar Wilde—His Kindness to Ernest Dowson—My Friendship with him—The Story of my Book—Subjective or Objective?—What crawled between us— <i>De Profundis</i> —The Implacability of Wilde's Enemies—The Obvious Sincerity of his Prison Book—Outward Evidence of this Sincerity—His Kindness to his Fellow-Prisoners—A Pupil in French . . . . .	412
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXV

Oscar Wilde in Prison—Two Years' Hard Labour—Wandsworth Gaol—His Removal to Reading—His Illness—His Subsequent Treatment—How <i>De Profundis</i> was Written—In the Exercise Yard—His Sympathy with his Fellow-Sufferers—His Fears for the Future—His Departure from Reading—Conversations in Prison—"Read Carlyle" . . . . .	424
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVI

Why Oscar Wilde returned to Former Friends—His Last Years in Paris—"Deaths are Apt to be Tragic"—Ernest La Jeunesse—His Magnificent Essay on Oscar Wilde—A Picture of the Poet in his Last Days—His Death and Funeral—My First Visit to His Grave—His Landlord's Story—Bagneux revisited—The Traffic in his Name—Literary Forgeries . . . . .	436
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVII

Emile Zola and Oscar Wilde—Zola's Extreme Reserve—A Few Facts of Literary History—The Pro-Zola Campaign—Vizetelly's Naïve Admission—Zola asks Advice about going to London—"Sic Vos non Vobis"—The Dreyfus Affair—The Story of an Interview—The Zola Trial—His Resentment against me—Our Final Meeting—My Collaboration with Daudet—"My First Voyage"—Two Strange Callers—How we Parted—At Daudet's Door—The End . . . . .	463
--	-----



## ILLUSTRATIONS

FERDINAND DE LESSEPS . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
GUY DE MAUPASSANT . . . . .	56
ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS . . . . .	66
BARON HAUSSMANN . . . . .	104
COMTESSE DE LESSEPS . . . . .	140
M. COQUELIN, CADET . . . . .	324
MADAME ADAM . . . . .	374
STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ . . . . .	390

### FACSIMILE LETTERS

	PAGE
JOSEPH AUBERT . . . . .	31
T. A. EDISON . . . . .	177



# TWENTY YEARS IN PARIS

## CHAPTER I

Victor Hugo—The Poet's Orchard—Sénat and his Collars—Hauteville House—The Ghost's Chair—Victor Hugo *en déshabillé*—His Last Years in Paris—Hero-Worship—The Poet and his Circle—Oscar Wilde and Victor Hugo—Victor Hugo and the Kings—His Last Autograph—His Public Testament.

IT was my good fortune when, about twenty years ago, I went to Paris to reside there permanently, to have the *entrée* of Victor Hugo's house, and during the last period of his life I saw much of that great man. At that time this was to me a matter of self-felicitation. I still most fervently admired the pseudo-charities of *Les Misérables*, and shared with the large majority of my contemporaries an exalted enthusiasm for the poetry of the great Romanticist.

My introduction to the author of *Les Misérables* dated from many years previously, when, as a boy, I lived with my parents in the house adjoining Hauteville House in Guernsey. Our gardens, as our houses, were contiguous, and when I have added that the poet's orchard boasted a remarkably fine plum-tree, famed throughout the island for the size and flavour of its mirabelle plums, I need hardly expatiate further on the nature of my earliest relations with our illustrious neighbour. I shall always regret that, detected one

day by Victor Hugo in the very act of larcenous trespass, I took to guilty and precipitate flight, too preoccupied, indeed, for my immediate safety even to listen to the remarks which were addressed to me. It has often since occurred to me that had I allowed myself to be impounded by the benevolent old gentleman, I should have enjoyed an address resembling in eloquence and picturesqueness of imagery the one which on a somewhat similar occasion was delivered by Jean Valjean to the youthful footpad. For the rest, the delinquency was never reported, and when a few days later I was allowed to shake the poet's hand, no reference to it was made.

It was the greyhound Sénat that procured for me the distinguished honour to which I refer. This was Victor Hugo's favourite pet. He had called it Sénat in derision of the Upper Chamber under the Empire, and on its collar were inscribed some lines beginning :

Mon nom, Sénat,  
Mon maître, Hugo.

Such collars, as relics and souvenirs, were much prized by tourists, and the consequence was that the loafers of St. Peter's Port were always on the look-out for the dog's appearance on Hauteville. Madame Chénais, Victor Hugo's relative and housekeeper, spent much of her time charging down the hill, with brandished umbrella, to the rescue of Sénat and his collar. On one occasion, by cutting off the retreat of the enemy as I returned up hill from school, I was able to render her strategical service, and in reward for this she introduced me to the poet, who had come up while she was thanking me. He was carrying a bunch of violets, which he presented to me with many kind words. What these words were I have forgotten, for with the guilt on my

conscience my embarrassment was such that I barely listened to words which I would now give much to recall. However, one thing that he said was that as I had saved Sénat's collar, in recompense I should see where Sénat and, "in parenthesis," his master lived; and that same afternoon, under Madame Chénais's guidance, I was admitted to view the wonders of Hauteville House.

The large sculptured oak chair which stood in the entrance-hall was what was most likely to appeal to a boy's imagination. From arm to arm a spiked chain was padlocked.

"It is the master's belief," I was told, "that every night the spirit of one of his ancestors comes and seats himself in that chair. That chain is placed there to prevent people from a profane use of the seat."

"But the spirit?" I began.

"Oh, the padlocks are unfastened every night. That is the master's orders, though it is our opinion that a ghost is not sufficiently *étouffé* to be hurt by the spikes."

I fancy that I was further told that this ancestor was the one whose name was not inscribed on the Arc de Triomphe, and that it was this slight that prompted his nocturnal meanderings.

Chairs seemed to play an important part in the curiosities of Hauteville House. In the dining-room one's attention was called to three chairs of graduated sizes, the Great Chair, the Little Chair, and the Middle Chair, on the backs of which the poet had picked out in copper-headed nails the words, "Pater," "Mater," "Filius."

This room was decorated with many of the poet's wonderful pen-and-ink drawings. "If Hugo had never written a line," said Auguste Vacquerie once to me as

he was showing me some of the poet's fantastic sketches, "there was fame, if not immortality, for him here."

But perhaps the most interesting part of the house was the belvedere on the roof, where in the fine weather Victor Hugo used to work. The view over the gardens, right out to the sea, was a splendid one. "But when the master is working," I was told, "he never sees that." I think that that was the first time that it was impressed upon me that artists do not draw inspiration from Nature. Victor Hugo's realism was self-engendered (the *petits cahiers* of Zola and of Daudet were not of his day); and whilst he was writing *Notre Dame de Paris*, although at that time he was living within ten minutes' walk of the cathedral, he never stirred from his room during the six weeks that he spent over that book. The Hauteville House workroom was as barely furnished as all his *cabinets de travail* had been. It contained nothing but a high deal desk, painted black, at which he used to write standing. "As each sheet is finished it is thrown on to the ground, and we collect them afterwards." I was informed that he used rough hand-made paper and quills. "The roughness of the paper is the only check on the flow of his composition."

The Philistines of Hauteville used to object that the poet often, as he warmed to his work, was wont, when writing under the hot sun in that conservatory, to divest himself of some of his clothing. They stated that it was his usual habit to show himself in that prominent place, where he was visible to every eye, in a state of almost complete nudity. This was not true; and the fact that under the true conditions of his *déshabillé* such a masterpiece as *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* had been produced could by no means be taken into consideration.

With my boy companions on the island, what made



for his unpopularity and provoked their criticism was that passage in *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, where Hugo describes the fight between Gilliat and the devil-fish in the very waters in which we used to bathe. The child who has been deceived does not readily restore its confidence. Victor Hugo had frightened us. The pleasure of long swims out to sea had been poisoned at its source; sheer terror followed in the ripples made by every stroke of the arm; the viscous and clinging contact of some submarine plant evoked a shout of terror. Yet we knew that there was no truth in the description; that such monsters as he had depicted never came into our peaceful waters, and that when he affirmed that he had with his own eyes seen a huge devil-fish pursuing a terror-stricken bather in a cave in Sark he was indulging in—in—well, poetic licence.

There was much malicious talk about Victor Hugo in Guernsey, where, as in other small communities, prejudice is very rampant. There was a story told about his cruelty to one of his daughters which represented him in a most unfavourable light. It was said that this daughter, having eloped with a British officer, who deceived her into a clandestine and illegal marriage, was refused admission to her father's house, when, some time later, having been cast off by her betrayer, she had returned to Guernsey. It was added that her father's cruelty, coming after her cruel betrayal, had affected her mind. I think that the fact that one of Victor Hugo's daughters was insane was the only foundation for a story which for years made people shrug their shoulders at the poet's professions of wide humanity. Slanderers are a very contemptible race. Indeed, their very practice and infamy are confessions of their own inferiority. The harm they do is incalculable. Few people there are who



have not cause to regret having listened to their evil tales about their contemporaries. I remember that when I first came to Paris, and desired to make the acquaintance of Alphonse Daudet, I was told that he was a man of most unfriendly disposition, who harboured for English people a special dislike, and that to present myself at his house would be to expose myself to slight and affront. I believed this story for years, and for as many years was deprived of a friendship which later was the joy and pride of my life.

At the age of seventy-nine, when I saw him again in Paris, Victor Hugo presented an appearance of extraordinary physical vitality. His face until almost the very end was full and coloured, and with his white hair brushed back over his monumental forehead, he looked like a sturdy and weather-beaten sea-captain on whose robust frame a hundred storms had broken. Time had not dimmed the wonderful lustre of the eyes which have been compared to the unforgettable eyes of the great Napoleon. His activity and hardihood seemed undiminished. It was his habit almost till his last illness to explore Paris, now on foot, now riding on the top of an omnibus. I have descried his noticeable form in the remotest parts of Paris. It was said that at that time every detective and every police officer carried in his pocket the photographs of two remarkable old men, of whom Victor Hugo was one, so that in case their tastes for exploring the *bas-fonds* of Paris might lead them into perilous adventures, the public scandal of an arrest might be avoided.

It often struck me that perhaps the finest trait in Victor Hugo's character was, that in the midst of the great and universal adulation with which in his extreme old age he lived surrounded, his natural simplicity

and external modesty never deserted him. The head of even the strongest man might have been turned; and in this respect also Hugo was undoubtedly, so it appeared to me, one of the strongest of men. It used to afford me amusement, not altogether untinged with regret, on the days of his public receptions, to listen to the terms in which the interpreters introduced to him parties of diverse nationalities. A group of English or American girls would, for instance, say to their guide, "Oh! tell Mr. Hugo that we have read his works, and liked them *so* much, and that we are *so* pleased to see him." This, with appropriate gestures, would be rendered, "Illustrious master, these young daughters of the young Republic" (or "of an antique monarchy," as the case might be) "feel it impossible to leave Paris without laying at the feet of that genius which is the imperishable glory of France and the wonder and honour of the universe, the laurel wreath of their profoundest admiration and homage." "C'est gentil," the poet used to answer; but I always felt that he saw the silliness of such phraseology. I have been told that, on the contrary, he considered such an address as no more than his due, that his conceit of himself amounted almost to megalomania, and that he was profoundly in earnest when he made his memorable threat that after death he would track the Almighty to the furthest recesses of the heavens and cry, "Maintenant, Seigneur, expliquons-nous."

Such seemed to me to be the opinion, for instance, of Monsieur Hippolyte Taine. In one of the many conversations I had with that eminent man we fell one day to talking about the French Academy and the various men who had failed as members of that "fashionable club." It was *à propos* of Zola's candidature. "There

are several men," said Taine to me, "who, having entered the Academy, were never able to make themselves at home there. The atmosphere of the place never seemed to agree with them. Look at Victor Hugo, who, during the last of his life, came to the Academy once or twice only each year. He was not at home in a club where the greatest equality reigns. Accustomed to being treated as an idol at home and outside, he felt utterly out of place in such an assembly."

But so he did not appear to me at the time, and I watched him closely. He seemed to me to be naturally gratified and touched by attention. After the hour-long procession past his house, on the occasion of his anniversary, when delegates came from every part of the world to do honour to him by the march past, his remark was, "How good it is of these young people to have come, many from so far, just to give me pleasure!" He seemed to me to object to anything like subservience and self-abasement. One night, as I was taking leave of him and he had given me his hand, I bent my head over it, prompted to do a liege's obeisance to the hand that had done such royal work. But Hugo drew it back and said, "That is done to kings only." Then he gripped mine firmly and added, "Voilà comment cela se fait entre hommes."

The only sign there was that age had taken any hold upon him was that every night after dinner, almost as soon as he had taken his place in the reception-room, he used to go off into a doze. Auguste Vacquerie, who always sat on his left hand, used, as soon as this had occurred, to raise a warning finger; the whisper, "The master sleeps," ran round the room, and conversation was hushed into undertones. This reception-room was curiously disposed. It was bare of furniture, except

a double row of *fautewils*, facing each other, which ran in parallel lines from the fireplace, halfway down the room. Opposite the fireplace was the door through which one entered the dining-room, and in the corners were statuettes, marble and bronze, on pedestals, votive offerings to the master of the house. Each of these *fautewils* had its titulary, who was as jealous of its possession as any lady at the Court of Versailles was of her *tabouret*. The one on the left hand nearest the fireplace was the master's seat. Madame Juliette Drouet used to sit opposite him in the *fautewil* on the right of the fireplace. To this seat, every evening after dinner, he used to conduct her, leading her in courtier fashion by the tips of her fingers with uplifted arm. When she had seated herself he used to bow to her, kiss her hand, and then step back into his own seat. Vacquerie always sat next to Victor Hugo, and next to Madame Drouet was Paul Meurice's seat. The place next to Vacquerie was reserved for visitors of distinction. It was accorded to Oscar Wilde on the night when I introduced him into the master's circle. Generally, however, it was occupied by a Polish princess, who was translating Swinburne into French verse, and who once expressed great indignation because Hugo's secretary asked me to what was to be attributed the English poet's excessive excitement. This was shortly after Swinburne's memorable visit.

The rest of the chairs were assigned each to some member of the household or *habitué* of the receptions. *Hoi polloi* disposed themselves in standing groups about the room. No little malevolent gossip used to be whispered round. "You are now to be instructed in the art of being a grandfather," was said to me on the occasion of my first visit, as the clock struck a certain



hour. It appeared that at a fixed moment in the evening Jeanne and Georges used to come in to bid their grandfather good-night. The suggestion whispered to me was that the old man's show of delight in his beautiful grandchildren, as well as their demonstrations of childish affection, were so much theatrical display intended to impress the visitors. But I felt very certain of the sincerity of Victor Hugo's joy in their caresses.

I have no recollection of what passed between Victor Hugo and Oscar Wilde ; but I think that their exchange of courtesies cannot have been more than the briefest. I remember seeing Victor Hugo asleep very shortly after I had presented the young Irish poet to him. Vacquerie's warning finger had been held up, and Wilde's brilliant talk on English poets in general, and on Swinburne in particular, had had to be carried on in undertones. It must have been to him an exercise to be brilliant in a whisper ; but I do not doubt that he acquitted himself well, for the *habitués* of the reception crowded round him, and both Vacquerie and the Polish princess seemed to hang on his lips.

In this *milieu* the pleasing fiction that kings are tyrants was sedulously kept alive. I really believe that when Victor Hugo and Auguste Vacquerie interceded with foreign potentates by means of rhetorical after-dinner telegrams on behalf of notorious criminals under sentence of death, they actually deceived themselves into the belief that the person whom they were addressing was directly responsible for the culprit's condemnation, and could at pleasure, without incurring any responsibility, accede to their requests. When the late Queen Victoria left unanswered a despatch from Hauteville House in which Victor Hugo recommended to her mercy a Jersey murderer, some very foolish remarks were made by the

poet about the Queen's want of humanity. Such talk was the common thing when these wild appeals were left unanswered. It flattered the middle-class Liberalism of the French, to which Victor Hugo as a novelist, and Vacquerie as a journalist, more specially appealed. One cannot forget the absurd article which the latter published in his paper, *Le Rappel*, on the occasion of the birth of King Alfonso of Spain. It was a diatribe against royalty in general and against the baby sovereign in particular. It was illustrative of the nonsense that used to be talked in Hugo's house, a remembrance of long after-dinner conversations between the dead poet and the writer of the article. "The mess that the baby makes in its cradle, that is royalty." One would hardly fancy that such things could be written, but the article is still to be found on the *Rappel* file.

Vacquerie was a mild and benevolent man, and it must have been with extremest effort that he worked himself into the proper state of excitement under which to write this and similar articles. One might have attributed the delusion that breathed in every line to the fiery and disturbing influence of alcohol, had one not known that Vacquerie, who was a valetudinarian, used to write his articles in bed whilst sipping cold bouillon. It was customary at the house in the Avenue Victor Hugo to speak of kings as tyrants of rapacious and sanguinary instincts. Yet perhaps no man in Paris had for either Victor Hugo or Vacquerie a more cordial salute or a more courtly bow than a dethroned king of the very mildest disposition. This was Queen Isabella's husband, Dom Francis of Spain, who often took his many dogs for an airing in the Avenue Victor Hugo. It was known that he was always hugely delighted if, on returning to his little

house in the Rue Lesueur, he could tell his equerry that during his walk he had met either the author of *Le Roi s'Amuse* or the editor of *Le Rappel*. I was present one evening at Hugo's house when there arrived a telegram from the Russian Minister of the Interior, in answer to one addressed to Gatschina on the previous evening—a most absurd message it was—announcing that a number of Nihilists, who had been lying under sentence of death, had been reprieved. The exultation expressed was very great; the excitement, almost childish. I wondered whether these manifestations of satisfaction—Vacquerie danced round the room waving his hands, whilst Victor Hugo hammered on the table with his knife and fork—were to be attributed as much to the joy that so many lives had been spared as to the evidence it gave that the influence of Hugo could make itself felt even at the remote Court of St. Petersburg.

One of the very last times when Victor Hugo wrote his name—I believe that it really was the last time—was a week or two before his death. It was done to oblige me. It now figures in the famous birthday-book of Lady D—— N——, amongst the most complete collection of royal and imperial autographs that probably exists anywhere in England outside of Buckingham Palace. I had taken the book to the house in the Avenue Victor Hugo, together with a letter to the poet in which I asked him to grant a lady this favour. The letter had been written for me by one of Hugo's *intimes*, in the place of a courteous note which I had written. "That will not do at all," he had said, after reading my letter. "You evidently do not know how one addresses the master." He had then written for me a letter which I considered most absurd.



One of his representations was that every religion needs an emblem. "Or, sans emblème," so ran one of the servile phrases, "il n'y a pas de culte." I had fancied that no man could tolerate flattery so obvious and so high-flown. The book lay for many weeks in the house of the Avenue Victor Hugo. I have been told that before entering his name upon the pages he turned over the leaves and examined with interest many of the famous signatures which passed before his eyes. He saw there the sign-manual of Louis Napoleon, and no doubt that in that serenity which is the dawn of the better life, all the old feelings of enmity, if indeed remembered, were put aside. The autograph of the Iron Duke would recall to him the deeds of General Sigisbert Hugo, his father, and perhaps for the last time there would be remembered the old, ever-rankling grievance that Sigisbert Hugo's name was not inscribed amongst those of other heroes on the Arc de Triomphe. For which imperial slight the Republic was to make magnificent amends when the Arc de Triomphe became the canopy of Hugo's funeral bier.

The publication of Victor Hugo's public testament produced a very bad impression in Paris. It had been written probably many years previously, and the phrases and professions on which the poet had counted for effect entirely failed to impress the public. His desire to be carried to his grave in the paupers' hearse was described as theatrical posturing; but what excited the most malevolent comment was the legacy of two thousand pounds to the poor of Paris: "Je donne cinquante mille francs aux pauvres." The sum seemed ridiculously small; the grandiloquent simplicity of the wording of the bequest, preposterous. The phrase rang out as an

anti-climax. People said that, having gained millions by exploiting the sentimentality of the middle classes towards the sufferings of the poor and forlorn, Hugo might have shown himself more generous. I have no doubt, however, that the testament was written at an early period in his career; at a time when two thousand pounds represented a large part of his fortune; at a time when fifty thousand francs was considered a considerable sum in France. One has but to remember what was the idea of "fabulous wealth," as conceived by Alexandre Dumas when he endowed the Comte de Monte Christo, to appreciate Hugo's magnificence at something like its value. I was reading the other day a passage in one of Paul de Kock's novels, where one hundred thousand francs was spoken of as "an enormous sum of money." I can well remember the time when an income of a thousand a year was considered in Paris a situation of fortune to be remarked upon. It was De Maupassant who first as a novelist indicated the new and reduced value of money. In *Bel-Ami*, when George Duroy and his wife have inherited a million francs, they mournfully admit that their new income will not enable them to keep a carriage. And though people are now beginning in France to understand the huge amounts of wealth which can be acquired and held by one man, the old exaggerated notion of the value of money still persists. Only the other day the papers were writing of young Baron Adelsward, the hero of the *Black Mass*, as "a young man colossally rich." His income, it appeared, was sixteen hundred pounds a year.

At the same time, Victor Hugo's income had been steadily decreasing for years before his death. After 1885 the sales of his works still further diminished. The publication of the "National Monumental Edition"

of his works ruined several people who were connected with that enterprise. Part of Jeanne Hugo's dowry, when she married Léon Daudet, was represented by her share in the annual royalties accruing from her grandfather's books, and the revenue so produced was a cause of great disappointment to the young couple. At the time of Victor Hugo's death, however, Paris believed that the poet was drawing really large sums from his publishers, and laughed malevolently at the meagreness of a donation announced with so loud a flourish of rhetorical trumpets.

## CHAPTER II

Crime and Punishment in France—The Leniency Displayed—The Sentimentality of the French Jury—Women and the Law—The Last Execution of a Woman in France—English and French Judges Compared—Maître Henri Robert and his Client—Joseph Aubert the Murderer—His Gascon Imagination—My Dealings with him—Aubert as a Postage-Stamp Collector—Aubert and the Insurance Clerk—The Stamp-Collector at Work.

THERE can be no doubt that Victor Hugo exercised considerable influence in France on the application of the penal code. It was understood that Monsieur Grévy's notorious objection to the death-penalty had been caused by reading *Les Derniers Jours d'un Condamné*. But I think that the extraordinary leniency of the French juries on the one hand, and of the Executive on the other, as they are witnessed to-day, are only another manifestation of the spirit of anarchy which is disaggregating in France the public thing. A general desire to shirk responsibility is the leading trait of modern French civicism.

One would like to attribute to superior humanity the extraordinary difference that exists in France, as compared to England, in the measures adopted for the repression of crime. But though in some cases, as, for instance, in cases of infanticide, humanity may dictate leniency to French judges and juries, this leniency, in the great majority of sentences, is prompted rather by a number of less estimable motives. For one thing the spirit of the Fronde is ever alive in the hearts of French-

men. It delights the French juryman to put himself in opposition to the Government, as represented by the Procureur de la République, or prosecuting counsel. It pleases him also to use his power to nullify laws the amendment of which he may desire. Private interests and personal considerations direct juries in France more than they undoubtedly do in England. It is, for instance, practically useless for the authorities to prosecute for infanticide before a rural jury. The rural juryman in France reasons to himself as follows: "If the woman had allowed her child to live, it would have become a charge on the commune, and we have quite enough communal charges as it is. The child was better out of the way, and I cannot see that we should punish the woman for rendering us a service."

I remember a case where a country jury not only acquitted a woman for murdering her illegitimate child, but subscribed a sum of money which they presented to her as she was leaving the dock amidst the acclaim of the populace. On the other hand, the same country juries show implacable severity in cases where their own interests are menaced. The vagabond, the pilferer, the poacher find small grace in their eyes. Many of the sentences passed in the provincial assize courts upon crimes against property are of Draconian harshness. It is in France, for instance, a capital offence to set fire to an inhabited house, even where no loss of life occurs. In many such cases within my recollection country juries have convicted without the admission of extenuating circumstances, and in one case that I remember the convict was duly guillotined.

In the early part of this present year a man was sentenced to death on the verdict of a provincial jury for attempted murder, although his victim had entirely



recovered from the attack and was able to give evidence against him. Monsieur Loubet did not see fit to revise the sentence ; the man had been for years a pest and a menace to the department in which he was convicted, and his execution followed as a matter of course. The French law considers the attempt at a crime, where there has been a commencement of execution, as culpable as the crime successfully carried out. The second clause of the penal code categorically lays down the law on this subject. Prado, the murderer, was sentenced to death twice over, once for shooting at a policeman.

The sovereignty of the law, which in England is paramount, is not recognised by French jurymen. They are always ready to admit a man's right to take the law into his own hands. In many cases where a woman acts so, her right is even more readily admitted. Inasmuch as affiliation is distinctly forbidden by the Code Napoleon, the seduced woman who shoots her betrayer or disfigures and blinds him with vitriol is most invariably assured of a triumphant acquittal. The largest license is allowed to women in the defence of their honour. When Madame Clovis Hugues, the wife of the Socialist deputy and poet, slew Morin, the private detective, in the Salle des Pas Perdus of the Palais de Justice in Paris, acting with so much deliberation that after the wretched man had fallen to the ground from the effect of her first shot, she emptied her revolver into his body, her detention was no more in question than her acquittal was doubtful. It is justifiable homicide in France to kill a man who enters your enclosure at night, although he may have no more wicked motive than to steal a few vegetables or a little fruit. A burglar may be shot down or otherwise slain like a mad dog, and not even an hour's arrest would result to the slayer.

The plea of "legitimate defence" is so elastic that a man who in a short fight may shoot or stab an unarmed aggressor will not even be sent for trial. Indeed, the plea has often been admitted when a man, having been attacked, escapes, provides himself with a lethal weapon, returns to resume the fight, and kills the original aggressor. I have seen homicides acquitted in France in cases of this kind where the medley has been resumed after an interval of several days. The argument in favour of the prisoner was that he was acting within the limits of "legitimate defence" to destroy an adversary from whom he had reason to suspect aggression.

On the other hand, the right of a husband to kill his wife and her accomplice in adultery, if he detect them in *flagrante delicto*, has never been recognised either by the French law or by the jury; and in many cases that I remember, a conviction, though never a capital one, has been the sanction of an act which in England is considered excusable. Alexandre Dumas's *Tue la* of the appendix to *L'Affaire Clémenceau* has always been violently disputed in France. To-day, the precept thus laid down is generally considered little less than an incitement to a cowardly and most culpable murder. I think that the verdicts in the Fenayrou affair showed that the theory of the husband's power of life and death over his wife's paramour was not one that could always be pleaded with effect before a French jury.

One has to remember, in considering the leniency with which the criminal law is applied in France, that in this country of recurrent revolutions antagonism to the law always exists in a chronic if sub-acute state. The jurymen, I repeat, are inspired by the spirit of the Fronde. Until quite recently the magistracy and the judges were recruited almost exclusively from the

reactionary classes. The prisoner is considered by his judges more as an offender against the Government than as an offender against the law, and the political spirit is rarely absent even from the most commonplace criminal trial.

At the same time the great impressionability of the average Frenchman must be taken into consideration. He can be moved by sentimental considerations which if propounded to an English jury by an English barrister in our country would excite nothing but ridicule. The criminal law barrister who in France is the most successful is the one like Monsieur Henri Robert, who can most readily move a jury to tears. Before the trial of a murderer, to whom I shall presently refer, Monsieur Robert, who had been briefed for the defence, wrote to me in London to ask me to write about his client, with whom I had been acquainted, such a letter relating any good that I knew of his character as he could read with effect to the jury. I complied with his request, and I had the mixed satisfaction of hearing that I had contributed in gaining for this man an admission of "extenuating circumstances."

It must be remembered that in France the judge cannot counteract the most irrelevant arguments *ad hominem*. It is years since the right of summing-up was taken away from the Court in France. The prisoner's counsel always has the last word, unless, indeed, the prisoner himself likes to address the jury on his own behalf; and, accordingly, the jury are often sent to their consulting-room with the tears streaming from their eyes. The result is, given the French character, that the chances of acquittal even where guilt is proved are great, and that often, at the worst, such a verdict is pronounced as entails only slight punish-



ment. Monsieur Robert, by his eloquence, has restored to society in France many criminals who in England would have had but the shortest shrift. He has raised irrelevancy and a disregard of the law to a fine art, and has proved himself a worthy disciple of his master, the great Lachaud.

Certain sentimental considerations appear in France to rank as unwritten amendments to certain definite laws. A woman, generally speaking, is considered excusable for killing her illegitimate child. I have indicated what prompts this leniency in rural districts. In the towns her guiltlessness is not as readily recognised, but even before the severest juries the verdict rendered allows only of a short sentence of imprisonment. It has often occurred to me, when assisting at the Old Bailey in London at the trial for child-murder of some forlorn and terror-stricken female, that had the poor wretch had sufficient knowledge of the world to take a third-class ticket from London to France, at the cost of a few shillings, she could have ridded herself of the living witness to her shame with no greater risk than one of a short detention.

Capital punishment, be it remarked, is never inflicted on women in France. Public opinion has definitely decided against such a sanction of the laws. It is now close upon twenty years since the last woman's head fell under the knife of the guillotine. The execution took place on the public square in Romorantin, and I witnessed the sanguinary transaction from the first floor of the town-hall, where, as a drunken municipal councillor remarked to me, we were "in the first tier of boxes to enjoy the spectacle." The execution was a triple one, and the crime for which the three murderers suffered was one of a very deep dye of turpitude.

It seems to have suggested to Zola the plot and the main incident of his novel *La Terre*. A peasant woman, assisted by her husband and his brother, murdered her old mother, who, having dispossessed herself in her daughter's favour of all her property, had come, like so many old peasants in France, to be considered a useless burthen, a charge to be ridded of. Even Zola did not venture to transcribe in all its horror the shameful story, for though old Fouan is indeed burned to death, his children imagined him to be dead when they set his body alight.

In the true story, however, these inhuman children literally roasted their mother alive. She was driven into the open hearth, and whilst the woman drenched her from a petroleum can, the two men prevented her from escaping by the use of their pitchforks.

After the horrid deed had been consummated, and the old woman's body had been consigned to the village churchyard, the daughter, in the ordinary discharge of her religious duties, told the priest of the village in the confessional that her mother had not fallen into the fire by accident, and gave a true account of the way in which she had come by her death.

The poor old priest was so horrified by what he had heard that, forgetting his oath of secrecy, he, almost unconsciously, blurted out to his aged housekeeper a story which he had not the strength to conceal in his bosom. In this way the authorities were put on the track of the abominable crime which had been committed, and the arrest and prosecution of the three peasants followed as a matter of course. The poor old priest was most violently attacked by the Freethinkers, who found here a splendid opportunity for calumniating the Church, and he was dismissed his *cure* with ignominy.

I arrived at my place at one of the windows on the first floor of the Romorantin town-hall just after the prisoners had been brought to the place of execution in one of the executioner's vans. I remember thinking what a small, ugly, and unimposing contrivance the guillotine appeared. It looked more like some clumsy, if ingenious, appliance of the book-binder or metal-stamper's craft than an engine which is the *ultima ratio* of human justice. There was no scaffold; the thing squatted on the ground like some monstrous toad. Behind the blue and red lines of the rows of soldiers a sea of faces showed ghastly white in the penumbra of the breaking day. The only worthy figure that stood forth in all that mass of men was that of the priest, who, holding his crucifix between the eyes of the convicts and the knife of the guillotine so as to mask its horror from their sight, was endeavouring to give them the last consolations of his faith.

"He may try to hide the guillotine from their eyes," said the councillor to whom I have referred; "that does not alter the fact that it is one of his cloth who brought them here."

I knew that two men and one woman were to be executed, and yet I saw only the two male convicts. "The woman has been pardoned, then?" I said.

"Oh, no," said the councillor. "That would have been *du propre*. No, there she is!" So saying, he pointed to a heap on the ground, close to the van, which I had taken for a bundle of rags.

In those days it was customary in France that when two or more accomplices were executed together, the more guilty criminal should be present at the execution of the others, and suffer last. President Carnot ordered the abolition of this odious custom at the first double

execution which took place under his presidency, the execution of Sellier and Allorto, and it has never been resumed since. But here the woman was supposed to witness the execution first of her brother-in-law and then of her husband. Nature, however, had cloaked her eyes. She had fallen fainting to the ground on alighting from the executioner's van.

When her turn came to suffer, Monsieur Deibler was forced to rouse her from her swoon. But she was too exhausted with terror to walk the few paces that separated her from the guillotine, and the executioner had to carry her thither. She was struggling all the way, and kept piteously screaming for her mother—"Maman! Maman! Maman!"—as she may have done as a little child when she was in fear or danger. I need not say that this gave the drunken Freethinker an excellent opportunity to display his wit and irony. The prisoner was bare-footed, with a shirt drawn over her clothes and a black veil bound about her head. This is the costume in which, in France, all parricides go to the scaffold. The peculiar and unusual costume added to the horror of one of the most poignant spectacles which I have ever witnessed. It is certainly to the credit of the French that such displays have been abolished by force of public opinion.

In contrasting the leniency with which juries and judges in France deal with female prisoners with the implacable severity which is meted out to women in our own country, one has been accustomed to attribute to the French much greater humanity than distinguishes the English. There can be no doubt that the French are more impressionable, and possibly more accessible, to the feelings of pity; but one must not overlook the facts that in England the respect of the law is paramount,

and that, on the other hand, the laws afford in England protection and redress to injured women which are pitilessly refused to them by the code in France.

The French girl who has been seduced has no claim on the father of her child. "La recherche de la paternité est interdite" is a formal dictum of the French law. No redress in the way of recovery of damages is open to the woman who has been jilted, no matter how cruel and perfidious may have been the conduct of the man. At the same time, it is certain that the French take a more humane view of the instinctive foibles of women, admitting that their recognised inferiority of strength extends also to their power of combating passions which in them, by a curious contrast, blaze more fiercely than in the male. It is very certain that in France, for instance, such a sentence as was passed in June of this year on Miss Doughty at the Old Bailey would have aroused a storm of public indignation.

By their right of granting or of withholding an admission of "extenuating circumstances," the French juries have the means of circumscribing the judge's powers in the allotment of punishment. The French juryman is, what he is not in England, a judge as well as a juror. The convict's sentence is practically fixed in the jury's consulting-room, and this so fully coincides with what public opinion deems to be right that it has often been demanded that the juries should be precisely informed, before they retire to their deliberations, as to the exact penalties which each of the different verdicts which they are entitled to pronounce will entail on the prisoner.

When in a capital case the jury finds that there are extenuating circumstances, the Court cannot pronounce the death penalty. In the same way the same ad-



mission must perforce reduce sentences in every other class of conviction. No such license as in England is accorded to the judge in France. The personal element is entirely absent from the pronouncements of the presiding judge at a criminal trial. It is not within his province, as it most certainly is not within his desires, to display either the buffooneries of a Quasimodo or the savagery of a Torquemada. He contents himself with the part assigned to him by his office, and is the law made articulate. When he delivers sentence, he is constrained by the regulations of his order to read out each clause of the law which defines the crime of which the prisoner has been found guilty, and which establishes the penalties which he has incurred. There is an air of transcendency about the whole transaction which adds immeasurably to the dignity of the proceedings. The French judge, speaking for doom, though he place no square of black cloth upon a masquerader's wig, impresses one, inasmuch as through his mouth one seems to hear the very voice and accents of the law, with all its awful majesty.

It is because of the power that the jury possesses to reduce the sentences prescribed by the code that the efforts of counsel in France are so largely directed towards arousing pity for the prisoner in the hearts of the jurymen. Every conceivable motive for compassion is invoked, and I am not at all certain that the story of the barrister who claimed the pity of the jury for a parricide on the grounds that his client was orphaned is nothing but a jest. I have certainly heard arguments *ad hominem* which were fully as absurd.

Maitre Henri Robert's great argument in the defence of Joseph Aubert, the murderer, to whom I have referred above, was that his client's state of health was so

deplorable that it would be cruel to put a term to his existence. If ever there was a case of murder in which the death penalty was justifiable, this was undoubtedly the one.

I first made the acquaintance of Joseph Aubert in a small hotel in the Latin Quarter, where I used to take my meals. Tragedy, though we did not know it, was a guest at that *table d'hôte* in the Rue Champollion. Of the people who used to sit down to dinner in the gloomy room which looked out on the dark courtyard, one, Joseph Aubert, was convicted of murder; another, a musician named Salmon, committed suicide; and this was also the way in which a third guest, the poet René Leclerc, put an end to his days.

Aubert was the typical Gascon—a man of exuberant verbosity, a boaster, with all the Meridional enthusiasm for what Daudet used to call the magnificent lie, loud in self-glorification, loud in dress, loud of voice. At the same time he was a man of very poor physique; he was afflicted with a kind of St. Vitus' dance, and had a curious habit—a *tic nerveux*—of jerking his head to the right, as though looking over his shoulder. Lombroso might have found for this habit a psychological explanation. He was a man of no courage, and altogether the very last man that I should have suspected to be capable of the deed of cruel violence of which he was afterwards convicted. He appeared to me to be a silly, vain fellow, too weak to be dangerous or even offensive; and though friends warned me against his acquaintance, I took pleasure in his boastful talk, and the extraordinary powers of imagination which he displayed. At that time, it appeared, he was drawing large sums of money from his mother, a poor old peasant proprietor of vineyards in the St. Julien district. He had imagined for the purpose

of deceiving her, an optician, whom he had christened Charles Daubincourt, and whom he had endowed with a prosperous business on the Boulevard St. Germain. It was in Monsieur Daubincourt's shop that the widow at the vinegrower's farm near St. Julien was, at the suggestion and through the agency of her younger son, investing her capital.

One day Aubert announced to us at the *table d'hôte* that he was taking a *café* in the Rue des Écoles, that he had engaged to superintend the kitchen there an ex-chef to the Emperor Maximilien, that his wines would be from his own vineyards in the Médoc district, and that he hoped that we would bestow our patronage on his establishment. He spent a considerable sum on having the *café* re-painted, decorated, and furnished, and obtained large supplies of liquor of every kind. The enterprise only lasted a fortnight. None of his Latin Quarter customers ever paid their scot ; the ex-chef to Emperor Maximilian was continuously intoxicated ; the general public avoided the house. One day the shutters of the Café de Bordeaux were not taken down ; an ironical notice to the effect that the house was " Fermée Pour Cause de Mariage " appeared on the door. It transpired afterwards that the funds which had been embarked in this disastrous speculation had been obtained from Madame Aubert on her son's representation that by investing a certain sum in Monsieur Daubincourt's business he would be taken into partnership, and he had added that as it was his intention to ask for the hand of the optician's only daughter, Mademoiselle Cecile Daubincourt, the day would not be far distant when, the optician having retired to the country, he would be sole proprietor of this flourishing business.

I saw Aubert shortly after the failure of the Café



de Bordeaux. He was then engaged in avoiding his creditors, and, notably, the butcher who had supplied the meat for the *table d'hôte*. He told me that this butcher was very angry, and had been threatening all kinds of vengeance; "but," he consoled himself, "he has never killed anybody." I think these words had a singular significance in the mouth of a man who was a potential murderer, and I can imagine the extension which the genius of a De Quincey could have given to the phrase.

It was some years before I met Aubert again. He had been living, he told me, in the South of France. He expressed great repentance for the errors of his youth, and told me that he had made full reparation to his mother. He was Gaudissart still; he still dressed in extravagant fashion, but his demeanour was quieter, and his wish to do well in a virtuous and orderly course of life so impressed me that I did not discourage his visits. He took advantage of my friendly feelings towards him to sell me a barrel of St. Julien wine, vintaged, as he told me, on his own vineyards. It was a wine, I was informed, which would vastly improve in bottle, and he persuaded me to leave it untouched for more than a year. I may add that when at last I opened one of these bottles, I discovered that a sour and abominable concoction had been foisted upon me, and I understood why he had tried, with all his Meridional arts of persuasion, to induce me to leave this claret until at least five years of maturing in bottle should have added greatly to its *bouquet*.

Some time after we had met again he offered to pilot me in the South of France, and together we visited Dax, Bayonne, Biarritz, and the Landes. I remember walking with him late one night through the thick pine-forest which separates the little seaside village of Capbreton

from the Paris high-road. He was aware that I had that afternoon received at a bank at Bayonne a considerable sum of money, and that I was carrying it in my pocket. As it afterwards transpired, his affairs were at that time in a disastrous condition, and I had often wondered why it was that during that midnight walk through the silence and gloom of this forest, he kept insisting that I should walk ahead of him. I have to-day, no doubt, that he had formed some designs against me and my money, but that his courage failed him. I was carrying a *makhila*, one of those heavy, loaded Basque walking-sticks which contain a lance, and he may have concluded that an encounter with me might not be successful.

On reaching Capbreton, we found that the one inn in the place was so full that we could only be accommodated with a double-bedded room. I passed that night in the same room as a man who was afterwards convicted of two murders, perpetrated under circumstances of peculiar atrocity, and in both cases with such a petty motive of robbery that the general opinion was that he must have had a long familiarity with crime. But, as I have said, I had never had the least suspicion of the things of which he was capable. He hung out no danger signals that were intelligible to me, though, if at that time I had been a student of Lombroso, I might have taken warning from one or two of his peculiarities. For one thing, in signing his name he made a most elaborate and complicated flourish to his signature, and this, Lombroso tells us, is a distinct sign of moral degeneracy. In the extraordinary letter which I annex to this chapter—extraordinary because of the quite unwarranted warmth of the feeling expressed—the student of graphology will find such a signature as is adverted to by the Italian criminologist.

I was so charmed with the village of Capbreton that

Cher  
#

Paris, le Mardi 16 Juin  
1896

Mon Cher Ami,

Je t'ai déjà écrit trois lettres en réponse à la tienne du 28 Mai dernier qui m'a été remise à Mazas le 1.<sup>er</sup> courant. Celle-ci est donc la 4.<sup>ème</sup>. Je ne puis comprendre la cause de ton long silence. Il se passe quelque chose d'extraordinaire et je te prie, mon cher ami, de bien vouloir me donner au plus tôt une explication afin de me sortir d'inquiétude. M.<sup>r</sup> le Juge d'instruction m'a affirmé qu'il laissait passer mes lettres pour toi et je n'ai aucune raison pour douter de son affirmation.

Dans l'attente de tes bonnes nouvelles je suis toujours ton ami sincère.  
J. Steubert

I remained there for upwards of one year, only leaving it to accompany Zola, at his request, on his first visit to England. Aubert returned to Paris, and I only saw him at rare intervals afterwards. He was then in business as wine merchant on the Boulevard des Filles de Calvaire, and used to drive about Paris in a gig, which was not the only point of resemblance between him and Probert, one of the murderers of Mr. William Weare. I next heard that he had been sold up, had abandoned the wine trade, and was frequently to be seen at the Halle aux Timbres, a place where collectors of and dealers in postage-stamps assemble for the purposes of their trade.

It is a well-known fact that criminals, having selected some branch of their nefarious business, some speciality in crime, usually remain faithful to their selection. The man who has once been convicted for stealing boots will probably steal boots again, and during the course of his criminal career little else but boots. Poor Bibi-la-Purée had a weakness for stealing umbrellas. Lacenaire's invariable method was to issue bills of exchange, and to await the bank clerk for the purpose of assassination. Courvoisier and Thurtell before him had mapped out a career in which a succession of crimes were to be carried out in precisely the same manner. It is as though crime were, in a large degree, a monomania.

The universal geniuses of criminality are the exception. Even Jack-the-Ripper, of notorious memory, was uniform in his methods. One might parody the French saying, and declare that "Le crime naquit un jour de symmetrie."

Aubert had decided to make a living for himself and his female associate, Marguerite Dubois, by stealing postage-stamp collections. He was totally ignorant of

the different values of rare foreign stamps; he was a philatelist only in this sense, that he knew that good prices could be obtained for certain specimens. He seems from the very first to have made up his mind to possess himself of these articles of commerce by any and every means in his power.

Some time after his conviction I met in the Luxembourg Gardens a clerk in an insurance office, whose acquaintance I had made at the *table d'hôte* in the Rue Champollion, where I also first had met Joseph Aubert. Some time before the murder of young Delahaef, Aubert had called on him one night, and had told him that he had recently become an ardent philatelist. The purpose of his visit, so he explained to Damés, the insurance clerk, was to examine his collection. After Damés, with some pride, had shown him the treasures he possessed, Aubert began to ask him about his financial position. Damés told him that he had some stock, and that he kept the bonds in his trunk, together with his stamp album. His visitor tried to impress on him that it was imprudent to do so, and warmly recommended him to hire a safe in one of the banking establishments.

In this way the time passed away; and suddenly Aubert, pulling out his watch, exclaimed with much annoyance: "It is past twelve. The last omnibus to the Avenue de Versailles has gone long ago. It will be quite impossible for me to limp all that way home, Damés; you will have to put me up for the night."

"I do not know how it was," so Damés declared to me in relating this story; "but before Aubert had finished speaking, the feeling came over me that I must get rid of the man at any cost; that for no consideration must I allow him to pass the night in my room. I had no reason whatever to suspect him of any evil designs.



I had always known him flush of money, and imagined him to be still in a very prosperous situation. But the feeling was there, and I could not shake it off nor reason myself out of the horrible premonition which had beset me. I at once told him that it was quite impossible for him to pass the night in my room. I invented a variety of excuses to explain my refusal; and as he continued to claim my hospitality, on the ground that it was too far for him to walk, and that, having left his purse at home, he was unable to take a cab, I gave him three francs with which to pay his fare. I am quite certain that that premonition saved my life. He had come with no other purpose than to rob me of my stamp collection and my savings, and his subsequent conduct shows that he would have recoiled before no means of effecting his purpose.

“On reaching home the next evening from my office, my *concierge* expressed great surprise at seeing me. It appeared that that morning, shortly after I had left the house, she had received a telegram, purporting to be signed by me, in which I announced to her that I had been sent on a business journey, and directed her to hand my trunk to a cabman who would come to fetch it. The cabman had duly arrived; my trunk had been handed over. It came out afterwards that the telegram had been written by Aubert, who was in waiting at the Gare du Nord to receive my trunk. He took it into a private room in one of the *cafés* on the Boulevard Denain, where he broke it open. The bonds he sold immediately at an exchange office opposite to the *café*, and my precious postage stamps were disposed of afterwards at ridiculous prices at the Halle aux Timbres.”

## CHAPTER III

A Murderer's Kindness to Animals—Aubert at the Bull-fight—The Killing of Delahaef—"The Aye-bite of Inwyt"—Aubert's Trial—A Letter from the Iles du Salut—The Guiana Convict Settlement—The Devil's Island as an Earthly Paradise—French Presidents and the Death Penalty—Executions in Paris—The Court of Appeal and its Limitations—A Two-Edged Sword—The Case of Madame Groetzinger.

ONE of the traits of Aubert's character was a kindness to animals. This characteristic has been often noticed in those who have no kindness for their fellow-creatures. At the time of his arrest at Cherbourg he was travelling with two pet cats, to whose subsequent fate he seemed to attach more importance than to that of Marguerite Dubois. When we were in the South of France together I accompanied him to the first bull-fight which I have seen, and I was much pleased to find that he shared the indignation that I felt at the horrors which we there witnessed. This was all the more creditable in him that people in the South of France—and Aubert was by birth a Southerner—seem entirely unable to comprehend the humanitarian outcry which has been raised against the introduction of bull-fighting into France by the Frenchmen of the North. They set these objections down to hypocrisy, or to a wish to dictate to the South, or to a desire for self-advertisement.

At the time of the bull-fight which I attended in Aubert's company, Madame Severine, of Paris, had been

writing in her most vigorous style against these brutal and heathen displays. The indignation against her amongst the *aficionados* of Bayonne was very great, and after the *corrida* was over, the less noble parts of one of the slaughtered bulls were cut off, and were forwarded by postal packet to the humane lady in Paris. That a number of Frenchmen of the rank of gentlemen should have acted in such a way where a woman was concerned showed how intense was their feeling about the injustice of Madame Severine's comments on their conduct and sportsmanship, and gave evidence of the complete difference in the psychologies of South and North. I have always thought that Aubert, by setting his opinion against that of the people of his part of France, showed that he had some instincts of good in him—a circumstance which I did not forget when the time came.

As far as the police were able to establish it, the first murder which Joseph Aubert committed was the assassination of a banker at Mons in Belgium, who had incurred his anger by suing him on a protested bill of exchange. During the carnival in Mons this banker was stabbed to death by a masked man who was disguised in a black domino. When he was taxed with this murder during his trial for the killing of young Delahaef, Aubert shrugged his shoulders and said, "The man was an arrant *canaille*; what is the use of bothering me about him?"

It is quite certain that nobody who had not served some apprenticeship in the practice of murder could so cunningly have devised or so coldly carried out the crime of which he was convicted. The motive of this murder was the plunder of a collection of postage stamps. Aubert had made the acquaintance of Delahaef, a weak,



crippled youth, at the Halle aux Timbres, and had learned that he possessed a valuable album of stamps. He set himself to obtain this album. He first fixed a rendezvous with Delahaef in a room in a hotel in the Rue du Mail, which he had hired for the purpose. The young collector, however, failed to keep the appointment, and thus prolonged his life by a few days.

Unfortunately he was more exact on the second occasion, and duly betook himself with his collection to Aubert's small flat in the Avenue de Versailles. Exactly what occurred here will never be known; but the theory of the prosecution was that Aubert attacked him from behind while he was bending over his collection, and with one terrible blow from a hatchet stretched him dead on the floor. Marguerite Dubois stated that on entering the flat some minutes after Delahaef's arrival she found the young man lying dead, and that Aubert, pointing to him with a gesture of triumph, exclaimed, "We quarrelled, we fought, and the victor's palms remained to the stronger." He then asked the girl to help him to pack the body up in a trunk which he had prepared for the purpose; but Marguerite declined, and sat reading a pink edition of some Court lady's *Lettres d'Amour*, whilst Aubert carried out his sinister preparations for concealing the body.

The *sangfroid* displayed by this weakly man showed him to be one of the most determined criminals who ever lived. After the body had been corded up in the trunk he went for a porter, and had the box carried to a packing warehouse, where by his directions a strong wooden case was built round it. While this was going on, Aubert sat in the workshop, chatting with the men and smoking cigarettes. As soon as the case was ready

he went for Marguerite, and drove off with her in a four-wheeler, with the huge case on the top of the cab. It was deposed by the cabman that at the Gare St. Lazare Aubert showed great reluctance to help him to lift the box to the ground. This gave the presiding judge the opportunity of making the sage remark to the prisoner, "You have heard of the danger of anatomical wounds, and were afraid of the danger of blood-poisoning if you pricked your finger with a splinter of the rough wood which enclosed the corpse of your victim." Aubert's prudence in this respect could hardly be considered an aggravating circumstance, although it certainly did show how completely he was master of himself.

His sinister luggage Aubert deposited at the cloak-room of a small station outside of Cherbourg, and then proceeded with Marguerite to look for a villa near the seaside. Here, again, premonition seems to have warred against his purposes. I heard that more than one person to whom the couple addressed themselves refused at the mere sight of them to accept them as tenants. It is true that Aubert expressed great anxiety to know if the sea in front of these houses was very deep. His purpose was, of course, to convey the box there across country, and either to sink it bodily into the water or to dispose of the corpse piecemeal. In the meanwhile (and here, again, the general observations on the conduct of guilty men exemplify themselves) he was frequently seen at the small station where he had left the trunk. He used to come there with a return ticket, and depart by the next train that went in the direction of Cherbourg.

Soon, however, the inevitable happened, and the attention of the station-master was drawn to the big box

in the cloakroom. It was opened; the gendarmes were sent for; and, on his next conscience-impelled visit, Aubert was arrested. The Paris police were able at once to identify the victim, for some days past, at the request of Delahaef's greatly alarmed family, a search after the young man had been begun. Delahaef was a quiet youth, who lived with his parents, and what first aroused in their mind a terrible suspicion that some foul play had been dealt out to him was the receipt, the day of the tragedy in the Avenue de Versailles, of a telegram purporting to come from him couched in the following terms: “Adieu. I am leaving for Folkestone, where I intend to embark for Chicago.”

When I heard of this horrible affair, it seemed to me inconceivable that the Joseph Aubert whom I had known could have acted in such a manner, and I wrote at once to him in his prison at Mazas to tell him this. In his answer he neither denied nor admitted his guilt, but contented himself with saying “that his affair was progressing very satisfactorily.”

Shortly after this letter I received another from Maître Henri Robert, in compliance with whose request I wrote down all the good things that I knew of Aubert's character. I said, amongst other things, that here was a provincial whom Paris had devoured physically as well as morally. It was, by the way, on Aubert's physical degeneracy that his counsel more particularly based his most eloquent appeal to the mercy of the jury; and, it must be said, Aubert very cleverly acted the part in the dock of a man who by the abuse of morphine had entirely destroyed his powers. He howled for morphine whenever the President put to him some probing and fatal question; he flung himself about in the dock like a madman; his screams echoed over all the Palais de

Justice. "Oh! what I am suffering!" ("Oh! ce que je souffre!") was the burden of his cries.

It was an abominable comedy, a piece of impudent Gascon duperly; but it was skilfully carried out, and, I fancy, greatly contributed to the favourable result. At the same time, no doubt, the jury were influenced by the fact that only a week or two previously a woman had been released from prison, where she had been lying for years under a conviction for murder. A judicial error had been committed; the woman was innocent. Monsieur Robert took full advantage of the incident to impress on the jurymen the danger of convicting capitally, and in the end, to the indignation of Paris and the outcry of the papers, Joseph Aubert, benefiting by an admission of extenuating circumstances, escaped with a sentence of penal servitude for life.

I heard from him directly after his conviction. He wrote in a very cheerful spirit, and was evidently delighted at the success of the ruse by which he, the Gascon, had deceived the Parisians, who fancy themselves so exceptionally clever. He asked me to send him some books, and enclosed a list of works of light literature which he desired to receive.

Some months later I heard from his brother that he had been removed to the convict depôt at the Ile de Ré, and that it would now be impossible for him to write to me direct. His message to me was, that he would be much obliged if I would send him "three singlets of white flannel and two or three pairs of long stockings in *laine pure d'Australie*, which could be obtained in London, and which were considered good for rheumatism."

I was interested by the unconsciousness displayed by this communication, and there was also subject for

reflection in the care of himself shown by one who had had so little heed of the sufferings of others. Indeed, the whole story of Joseph Aubert, repulsive as it was, presented a rich field for psychological observation, and this must be my excuse for the extension which I have given to it in these pages.

I was to hear from him again after his transportation. In 1899, at a time when the Dreyfus affair was at its height, and one was hearing much talk about the penal settlement at the Iles du Salut, I received a letter from French Guiana bearing the postmark of St. Laurent du Maroni. This letter came from Joseph Aubert. It had been written, he told me, "by the vacillating light of a candle as I lie stretched on the floor of the sleeping-shed." He informed me that he had come to the conclusion that it was impossible for a person of his physical weakness to escape from Guiana by the overland route, that is to say, through the French, Dutch, and British settlements into Venezuela, and that he had decided on taking ship for Europe and liberty. He asked me to send him by postal packet a further supply of singlets, "into the sleeves of which you will have taken the precaution to insert four banknotes for one hundred francs each, which will be preferable to a cheque. With this sum and one thousand francs which my brother has promised me I shall be able to accept the offer of a worthy citizen of this town, who undertakes for that payment to smuggle me on board a sailing vessel. I cannot get more than a thousand francs from my family, who, just now, are on somewhat cold terms with me." He added that in recognition of the service rendered to him by an Englishman, he would settle in England and devote himself to a literary career. As to France, his native land, he turned his back on her for ever. She



had acted too badly towards him. He concluded by urging me once more to assist him to escape from that earthly hell, French Guiana. The letter was not signed except with initials, and the fact that it had safely reached its destination gave one food for reflection. I half suspected a trap laid by the *gardes-chiourme* or warders; but before I could make further inquiries, I heard that Joseph Aubert had died. The *régime* had killed one more convict, and to his body had been accorded the Cayenne funeral. Almost every evening from the Iles du Salut a skiff emerges into the waves. One, two, or more stark, unshrouded corpses are thrown overboard; the shimmering swarm of sharks does the rest.

Marguerite Dubois, who was found guilty of receiving stolen property, knowing it to be stolen—Aubert had presented her with a bracelet out of the proceeds of poor Delahaef's collection of postage stamps—was sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Her conduct was good, and she benefited by a reduction of her sentence, so that only eighteen months after her conviction she was once again walking the streets of Paris.

For all but the strongest convicts Guiana proves itself a "dry guillotine." If recent revelations can be believed, the treatment of the prisoners at the penal settlement of Cayenne is incredibly barbarous. The food is abominable. An anarchist who served a sentence of five years on the Iles du Salut, stated in his account of his prison life, which was published some time ago in *Le Journal*, that during the whole time that he was a prisoner he ate nothing but bread. The other rations consist of mouldy beans and lentils, and all the tinned meats which have been rejected as unfit for food by the military and naval commissariats. The punishments are incredibly severe.

Botany Bay in its worst days compared favourably with Cayenne in the twentieth century. Aubert was right in speaking of his prison as a hell on earth. The *morale* of the *bagne* seems as bad as ever it was at Toulon or at Brest. The climate is described as deadly, and of course of the reputation of the islands in this respect much use was made at the time by the people who were invoking compassion for the fate of Captain Dreyfus. I am not certain that the Iles du Salut merit so bad a name in this respect.

Bernard Lazare once lent me a pamphlet about the Devil's Island which gave quite a different account of the place. Its name, so ominous in sound, did not proceed from the physical horrors of the island. It had been called so because at one time a refractory prisoner, who was known as "the devil" in the penal settlement on the Ile Royale was marooned there. The pamphlet to which I refer, placed in my hands by Captain Dreyfus's most ardent partisan, was written by one of the victims of the Coup d'État, one Henri Chabanne, known as "le Nivernais Noble Cœur," who spent some years on the Devil's Island. He gives an idyllic description of its natural beauties, of the freshness of the sea breezes, of the warbling of the birds in the trees, and he concludes by saying: "J'y éprouvai tant de douces émotions, que j'ai dit cent fois que c'était le futur paradis du monde."<sup>1</sup> The *régime*, the enforced and excessive labour, the almost total absence of sanitary precautions, however, account for the terrible mortality amongst the convicts. "Marche ou crève" ("Work or rot") is the alternative given to the

<sup>1</sup> "I experienced there so many sweet emotions, that I said a hundred times that this place" (the Devil's Island) "was the future earthly Paradise."



*forçats* in the labour gangs, and most of them succumb miserably long before their sentences have been worked out. These wretched circumstances are unfortunately not known to the classes from which, in France, criminals are mainly recruited. The idea prevails that Guiana is a very pleasant place, and that the lot of the transported convict is only one degree inferior to that of the State-aided emigrant.

Amongst the roughs of Paris one hears the expression of most extraordinary notions about the penal settlement. It is generally imagined that it is a place where all the trees are red, which is peopled by aboriginal women of the greatest charm and beauty, and where gold and precious stones may be picked up off the earth in the greatest profusion. The national, total ignorance of geography strips the remoteness of the place of exile of all the horrors that used to haunt the English criminal at the mere thought of Australia. The chances of being executed for murder, owing to the leniency of the jury and the reluctance of the President to refuse a reprieve, being known to be small, the alternative of transportation for life by no means terrifies the French criminal; so little, indeed, that many murders have been committed in France with no other motive than to qualify for this form of emigration. "I have led a miserable life in Paris, often without food and without a shelter, and any change in my circumstances can only be an improvement. I want to be sent to the colonies, and I committed the crime with which I am charged so as to force the Government to provide for my future."

Disillusionment commences for the poor wretches the moment after they have embarked at the Ile de Ré, when they first come under the discipline of the colonial penitentiary warders. These enforce their orders with

a bludgeon, and can oppose the slightest attempt at revolt with sabre or revolver. A sentence of five years in the *bagnio* of Cayenne is equivalent to a sentence of death, slow and lingering, but almost inevitable. Possibly this fact is taken into consideration by the juries when they pass verdicts which do not allow of a sentence of immediate death, and if this be so their apparent clemency is masked severity. I have no doubt that the President, when against the advice of the Committee of Pardons he reprieves a prisoner sentenced to death by the guillotine, feels that it is but a poor grace that he is extending to the wretched man. Many of the scores of murderers who were reprieved by President Grévy must have lived to regret his instinctive horror of the death penalty, a trait in his character which had won for him among the criminal classes the nickname of "Papa Gratias."

President Carnot allowed himself to be guided by all the circumstances of the case. I was told at the Élysée on the occasion of one of my visits there that the President often spent the whole night over the dossier of a prisoner under sentence of death, reading over every paper in the case with the greatest attention. One fine afternoon in the summer, when I was visiting the President's private apartments in the left wing of Fontainebleau Palace, I was told by the military *attaché* that he was forced to hurry me through the various rooms because, contrary to his usual custom when *en villégiature*, Monsieur Carnot intended to get back to work at an early hour that afternoon. "See there," said the general, pointing to a huge bundle of papers which was lying on the President's table—we were in his private study at the time—"that is a dossier which has just come in from the Ministry of Justice, the report of the

Committee of Pardons on X's petition for a reprieve. The 'patron' never keeps such things waiting, and he may be here at any minute to commence reading the papers. It means that he won't dine properly to-night; and very probably when I go to his bedroom to-morrow morning I shall find that he has not gone to bed nor slept a wink all night. He will still be plunged in the reading of these wretched papers."

I know that President Faure did not take this duty in any degree as seriously as his unfortunate predecessor. He used generally to allow himself to be guided by the opinion of Paris, for he had his personal popularity at all times before his eyes. Monsieur Loubet seems generally to have deferred to the opinion expressed by the Committee of Pardons. Fortunately for his personal comfort, the circumstance that since the demolition of the Roquette prison there has been a difficulty in finding any place for the guillotine, and that in consequence executions have, *de facto*, been abolished in the French capital, has relieved him to some extent of a painful and responsible duty.

It is highly probable that before the end of next year the Chamber of Deputies will have approved of a law which has already received the sanction of the Senate, and that public executions will be abolished in France. Unless something of the kind is done, capital punishment may be said to be abolished, at least as far as Paris is concerned. The inhabitants of the various quarters which have been suggested as suitable places for executions have expressed such decided objections to the proposal that for some years past they have been able to enforce their wishes. The landlords in these different quarters argue that it must greatly reduce the value of their property to have the guillotine in operation

in their neighbourhood, and under a Republican Government the wishes of influential electors are paramount.

For the rest, the accounts of executions in Paris have always been greatly exaggerated with respect to the scenes of disorder which are alleged to have taken place. At the Roquette the most stringent police regulations, and the massing on the square of a large number of troops, both on foot and on horseback, prevented anything even approaching to a scandalous scene. It is true that after the guillotine had been removed, and the troops had in consequence been withdrawn, the square was invaded by a rush of rabble of a very objectionable type; but where the law affords such disgusting spectacles as the slaughter of a human being, it can hardly be expected that the better and humaner classes will be represented amongst the spectators.

My duties often took me to the Place de la Roquette, and I cannot recall any occasion on which anything in the conduct of the public called for censure. The people were some of them excited; others, like myself, were profoundly disgusted and ashamed at the whole grotesque and sanguinary buffoonery; but what fault there was to be found was rather with the ceremony itself than with the bearing of the spectators.

The opponents of the death penalty will take advantage of the suggestion of a reform in the manner of carrying out executions to advocate their total abolition; and here Victor Hugo, echoing in this respect Doctor Samuel Johnson, will afford them some striking arguments, which to my mind are irrefutable. If the thing is to be done at all, let it be done with the greatest publicity. If you are ashamed of the thing, as is everybody who has attended an execution, then abolish it. It is absurd to butcher a man in a prison yard for the

sake of example ; and if you deny that the death penalty is inflicted for the sake of example and warning, then you surrender your last justification for the brutal business. Let Society face its responsibility ; let it hang its murderers as high as Haman, so that all the world may see what it has done, or let it resign into wiser hands the powers of life and death, if it doubt its right to wield them.

I have often heard much amusement expressed among French jurists at the idea which seems to be held by English people about the functions and powers of a Court of Criminal Appeal. The constant references which are made by ill-informed persons in London to the French Courts of Appeal and Cassation invest these tribunals with powers which they never possessed, and which it never entered the head of any French legislator to endow them with.

There is only one Court of Criminal Appeal in France which can be addressed by a person who is dissatisfied with his sentence, and that is the Tribunal des Appels Correctionnels, a tribunal which is sufficiently well replaced in England by the appeal to Quarter Sessions, with this advantage in France, that the prisoner has always faculty of appealing, while in England the very magistrate or magistrates with whose decision fault is found have to grant permission for the fresh proceedings to be taken.

The reluctance frequently shown by country benches to state a case may proceed from the fact that in the event of a reversal of their decision the costs of the appeal will come out of their own pockets. In France, on the other hand, the Court of Correctional Appeals can increase the original sentence, and has done so. The prosecutor, represented by the Procureur de la



République, has, of course, exactly the same right of appeal as the defendant, and for some years past it has been a fixed rule in Paris that where a Police Correctionnelle prisoner appeals against a sentence, the Procureur-Général appeals simultaneously against the leniency of the sentence: *a minima*, as it is called.

People in England seem to forget that appeal must necessarily be open to both sides; in other words, that it is a two-edged sword. The advocates of a Court of Criminal Appeal in England seem to desire the institution of a tribunal to which any prisoner who is dissatisfied with his sentence may go for a fresh trial and a fresh consideration of the penalties he has incurred. But these advocates do not provide for the case where the higher court shall confirm the verdict and the sentence of the lower one, nor do they explain at whose cost these proceedings are to be taken. Is the Treasury or is the prosecutor to pay not only the expenses of the fresh prosecution, but those of a destitute prisoner's appeal, or is the Court of Criminal Appeal in England only to be open to moneyed prisoners, so that the scandals to which we are familiar in the United States may be repeated at home?

But the great point which these advocates overlook in comparing our judicial system with that which exists in France is that the French Court of Cassation does not decide on questions of fact, does not interfere with *la chose jugée*. It can only be approached on questions of law; and in this respect we are as amply provided in England by means of the Court of Crown Cases Reserved. It can direct a fresh trial on the grounds of some breach of the strict regulations under which criminal trials are ordered; where no such breach has occurred in the course of the proceedings, the only resource that a



prisoner who is dissatisfied with his sentence can fall back upon is, exactly as in England, his constitutional right of appeal to the clemency of the head of the State.

It should be remembered that even when a fresh trial is ordered in France the prisoner is by no means assured that he will fare better at the hands of his new judges, and there can be no reason to expect that in England under the new order of things a reduction of sentence could always be looked for. In France the second jury often takes a much more severe view of the prisoner's guilt than the first jury had taken. Appeal, it may be repeated, is a two-edged sword. I do not need any better example of that than the case of Madame Groetzinger, who was tried for murder at the Paris Court of Assizes two or three years ago. The murder was a particularly brutal one; she had shot her husband in a treacherous manner as she was handing him his coffee one morning in bed, and there were other circumstances which deepened her guilt. The Paris jury, however, took a lenient view of the case, and returned such a verdict as limited the sentence which the court was able to pass to one of five years' solitary confinement.

Madame Groetzinger was very dissatisfied with this sentence (in England she would most certainly have been capitally convicted and as certainly hanged), and appealed on some technical grounds to the Court of Cassation. Some irregularities had been committed (amongst other things, one of the jurymen had uttered an exclamation of horror on hearing some particularly revolting detail), and the Higher Court quashed the verdict and sentence, and ordered a fresh trial.

As usual in appeal cases from the Paris Assize Court, the fresh trial was held at the Assize Court of

Versailles. Here the jury took a severe view of Madame Groetzinger's crime, and found her guilty of murder without any extenuating circumstances. In consequence, the Versailles judges had no option but to sentence her to death. And it cannot be argued that the Versailles jury is always severe where Parisian murderers come before it, because one remembers many cases where sentences have been reduced at a fresh trial in the *chef-lieu* of Seine-et-Oise, as, for instance, the case of the Fenayrous.

It seems to me that justice would have been treated with respect if Madame Groetzinger had been forced to abide by the results of her appeal, and I am quite certain that in England she would so have been forced to abide ; but President Loubet took the view she had been too harshly dealt with, and commuted her sentence back to the one originally passed upon her. But this instance shows that in France appeal is by no means always in favour of the panel, and this is a fact which the agitators for judicial reform in England would do well to remember.

## CHAPTER IV

Alexandre Dumas *Fils*—Below Stairs in the Avenue de Villiers—Jean Richepin—"La Dame aux Camélias"—Flaubert and "Madame Bovary"—Guy de Maupassant—His Contempt for Literature—His Adulation of "Society"—Pessimism and Pessimists—The Norman Peasants—The Doctor and his Patient—De Maupassant's Illness—Dr. Blanche—His Absent-mindedness—De Maupassant's End.

IT was, thanks to Lady D—— N——'s birthday-book that a month or two after I had got it back from Madame Lockroy, embellished with Victor Hugo's last signature, I made the personal acquaintance of Alexandre Dumas *fils*. I had, however, been in frequent correspondence with him for some time previously on literary matters. He had been consulting me on the English laws on bastardy and the position in England of illegitimate children, and—which explains the frequency of our letters—did not seem able to believe that in any civilised country such laws could exist as in England regulate the position of natural offspring.

It was at his invitation that I called one evening at his house in the Avenue de Villiers, to fetch the book which I had sent him for his signature with a note some days before. It was the first time that I had been to the house, and by accident rang at the *porte de service*, or tradesmen's entrance. I was duly ushered into the kitchen. The cook was busy dishing up the novelist's dinner, and the footman, who may have thought me a

competitor for his office, evidently considered me beneath his notice. So I sat down in the kitchen and watched the proceedings, and could not help but overhear the conversation of the servants. This mainly turned on the kindness of the "patron" and the acrimony of the "patronne," who, as I knew, was a confirmed invalid. It appeared that it was Dumas's custom to visit her every morning, and to spend two hours by her bedside, cheering her up with his brilliant conversation. From what the servants said, he was not always successful in winning her into a pleasant humour, and I will not repeat what alternative treatment was suggested in the servants' hall for dealing with this unpopular lady.

At last such scabrous details were entered upon that I felt like an eavesdropper in remaining there any longer, and I bade the footman take my card up to his master. He refused to disturb the "patron" while he was at dinner; "and, young man," he said, "that is as much in your interest as in mine." When, some time later, I was ushered into Dumas's study, and he had heard where I had been waiting, he was vastly amused, and said, "You ought to find there the subject for a comedy. You remember where Sardou found his *Pattes de Mouche*? In a tobacconist's shop." I told him that an English comedy existed which is called *High Life Below Stairs*, and I added that if I did venture to think of writing for the theatre, it would be my ambition to write a play in which Sarah Bernhardt could act the leading part. "And," said Dumas, "you do not see Sarah in the rôle of a cook?" "No," I said, "nor Jean Richepin as a *valet de chambre*."

At that time Jean Richepin was in close attendance on Madame Bernhardt. He had abandoned his literary

work, and had appeared in her company on the stage of one of the boulevard theatres in the rôle of Nana Sahib, in which he had been able to give full play to his hatred for the English. A day or two previously a friend had taken me to see Sarah Bernhardt in her *loge* at the Vaudeville Theatre, and in the little *salon* adjoining the dressing-room we had met Richepin. He folded his arms and treated us, I think because we were English, to his most melodramatic scowl. I must make haste to add, however, that years have wrought a great change in him. His character has altogether softened down, and one night at Daudet's house, after a long conversation with the author of *Le Flibustier*, I determined that Jean Richepin was one of the most delightful and sympathetic men I had ever met.

In the course of my conversation with Dumas *filis* I made some reference to "*La Dame aux Camélias*." He did not seem very pleased at the mention of this name, and exclaimed: "Toujours donc la Dame aux Camélias!" I presumed that he meant that after-experience had rendered him sceptical of the depth of disinterested affection, of which the Marguérite Gauthiers of this world are capable, and that his attitude on the subject of unchaste women might rather be gathered from what he had written in the appendix to his book *L'Affaire Clemenceau*. His irritation at the mention of his famous novel I afterwards understood better when Guy de Maupassant had told me that the mere name of *Madame Bovary* used to exasperate Gustave Flaubert into the use of strong and even foul language, which in so refined a purist might be taken as a sign of very great anger indeed. I presume that it must indeed be galling for an author who has written many books to find that the public, disregarding all his later efforts, persists in



labelling him as the author of the book by which his reputation was first made. So strongly did Flaubert feel on this subject that in his later years he used systematically to decry what is his undoubted masterpiece. "*Madame Bovary* c'est de la cochonnerie. *Madame Bovary* c'est de la——" he used to shout out when anybody congratulated him on this book. "To hear him talk of '*Madame Bovary*,'" said de Maupassant, "one would really have thought that he was ashamed of the book." In poor de Maupassant's case, by the way, the process was reversed. He is spoken of, and indeed before his lamentable death was known as, the author of *La Horla*, which not only was one of his last works, but the work in which the dirge of his fine intellect began to toll.

I was all the more impressed by Maupassant's remarks because it was very rare indeed to hear the young master make any pronouncements on literature. "There are so many things of so much greater interest to talk about," he used to say. If de Maupassant wrote at all it was with no sense of a vocation. It was, I suppose, because the man who has the *caco-ethes* must even take pen in hand, and it was because, for a life of pleasure and luxury, the large revenues produced by his pen were indispensable accessories of income. He despised literature as a *métier*, he loathed the professional *homme de lettres* as such, and avoided his literary *confrères* with as much diligence as he sought after those who float, idle butterflies, through life.

I first made his acquaintance in 188—, shortly after he had written *Yvette*, and was impressed with the utter contempt with which he spoke of the effort. At that time he seemed vastly to prefer to talk about the sea and about yachting, and he was rather proud of the fact that



some time previously he had rescued from the waves at Etretat the English poet Swinburne, who, Byron-like, a magnificent swimmer, had on that occasion outswum his strength. De Maupassant asked me to come down to his villa "Les Mouettes." "You will be able to study the Norman peasants in the neighbourhood of Etretat better than in my books," he said. I asked him for the authorisation to translate *Yvette* into English, and he said, "Traduisez, traduisez"; but he refused to listen to any business proposals on the subject.

It was on a subsequent occasion that he spoke of Flaubert and *Madame Bovary*; but I fancy that he was always ready to admit his indebtedness to Flaubert, and indeed anxious to proclaim it. It was under the tutorship of his kinsman that he learned that supremacy of style which he maintained throughout, and which was always his first preoccupation. On one of the rare occasions on which I ever heard him talk of literature and of his methods of work, he spoke in confirmation of what is told of the author of *Madame Bovary*, that he used to write up sentences on a blackboard, so as well to be able to discern their beauties or their defects. "There was much good in the practice," he said, and he told me how he polished and revised. For the rest, he was known to be a rapid writer, and by fits and starts of immense industry and productiveness.

At the age of forty-three, when his fine career was brought to so lamentable a close, he had produced more than twice the gigantic output of Balzac, whom with Zola he held to be "the father of us all," and, even as Balzac did at his age, looked upon all that he had done till then as a mere preface to what was to follow. I had not met him for over a year when the blow fell, and on the last occasion on which I saw him, at a garden-party



*Photo by Nadar, Paris.*

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.



in Sèvres, it had struck me that there was something strange in his conversation. He kept talking of money and of fashionable folk whom he had met or whom he had hoped to meet, as though by birth and talents he was not very far superior, even from a social point of view, to all the silly people whose names he mentioned.

I suppose that if I had been a pathologist I should then and there have recognised in this talk the prodromes of megalomania and general paralysis. I presume that Maupassant was one of the men referred to by Professor Ball, when lecturing at the *École de France* on that form of insanity, as marked out as one of its victims. The Professor said: "There are at present living in Paris, and astonishing the world with the brilliancy of their intellects and the wonderful cleverness of their writings and conversation, several men whose very cleverness and brilliancy are recognised by the pathologists as certain signs of the approach of general paralysis." The prophecy came true in the case of de Maupassant and of others; but the terrible irony of Fate which so appealed to the Greek tragedians manifested itself here also, and Professor Ball himself was the first to fall a victim to the insanity which he had analysed so well in his writings and in his lectures.

If in those early days I had been asked to predict, having been assured that there were the germs of insanity in de Maupassant, to what form of the malady he would succumb, I should have answered that probably melancholia would eventually seize upon this man, who in his writings showed himself so confirmed a pessimist. At that time I had not acquainted myself with the biography of Schopenhauer; I had not studied certain contemporaries in their daily life; and Hartmann had not yet afforded a striking example. I still believed

pessimism to be altruistic, whereas the fact is that it is one of the most pronounced expressions of the most egotistical individualism. In the pessimism of a Maupassant, a Schopenhauer, or an Ibsen sorrow for the human weaknesses which they so pitilessly expose, compassion for the victims of these impulses and passions are entirely wanting. I believe that most pessimists despise humanity in the inverse ratio to their admiration for themselves, an admiration which in the end develops in many cases into megalomania and that form of insanity of which it is the harbinger.

De Maupassant's pessimism, however, proceeded not entirely from this disdain of humanity. The despair of life was the text from which he constantly preached, and it seemed to me, when the blow fell, a strange fact and a striking one that the pessimism and the despair of life which he had taught ever since he took pen in hand should have received confirmation in a manner so inexpressibly sad. What indeed, one might ask, is the good of ambition, and of hope, and of effort, and of project, and all of the other impulses to which the human marionette moves, when the end was there, —there, in that discreet house in Passy, Doctor Blanche's asylum, to which so many waifs and strays have come? "*À quoi bon?*" was the text from which he preached again and again, and "*À quoi bon?*" indeed, might one ask when one thought of his genius distracted, of the bells, once so precise and clear, all jangled out of tune, of the hand relinquishing the master-pen to grope stealthily for an arm for self-destruction.

From his writings, Guy de Maupassant appeared as a pessimist to the innermost fibre of his being. He appeared as a pessimist from reason and by observation. From reason, for he argued, as in his *L'Inutile*

*Beauté*, that man, having no place in this world, must necessarily be unhappy, where provision for animal happiness has alone been made, and by observation, from his supreme contempt of human nature. Despising men and women, in rebellion against the circumstance that, a man himself, he had to live out a man's life, seeing no port to which it was worth his while to steer, he seemed, from his writings, to have abandoned the helm and to be allowing himself to drift rudderless into stormy seas.

The psychological truth, in fact, was different; I am speaking from what appeared from his writings. As a matter of fact, he seemed to enjoy life very much, and for Society he had none of that contempt which he expressed for humanity in general. One knows, similarly, that Schopenhauer exulted in the sensualities of the table, and as a boon-companion was the most exuberant of men. I have seen Maupassant radiantly happy. His summers were usually spent at Etretat, and it was there that I once met him cycling in a lane which was redolent with hawthorn blossoms. I do not think that I ever saw a man who looked happier.

In his writings, again, he always showed himself happy when he got away from Man, and faced Nature. Where, for instance, could one find more exuberance of spirits, more *Lebensfreude*, more enthusiasm, and more colour than in his book *Sur l'Eau*, which gives a series of pictures sketched while yachting on summer seas. Every prospect seemed to please him: man he always found vile. If one met him in Paris, unless the society which surrounded him was of the very highest aristocracy, he showed himself irritable, reserved, capricious, and on his guard. He had all the restlessness that is one of the prodromes of the malady to which he



succumbed; he could not settle down anywhere in town, and dragged his *ennui* from one house to another. I have heard it said of him, "Qu'il déménage pour le plaisir de déménager." He was not popular in the society which he so adulated, in spite of his recognised mastery.

One can quite understand that he has never acquired fame in England, where the great artistic truth that the fable is no less true because the wolf is cruel, the fox cunning, and the monkey malignant, is not recognised, and where a book is certain to fail in popularity if the characters are not "sympathetic." De Maupassant, now, just excelled in portraits of characters which are not sympathetic. His fables are terribly true; and because this is so, his men-wolves, men-foxes, and monkey men are terribly cruel and malignant and cunning. The book which first made his name, *Boule de Suif*, is an album of pictures of selfishness and hypocrisy.

Selfishness and hypocrisy are the texts of nine out of ten of his numerous short stories. In *Une Vie*, which many consider his masterpiece, the ugliness and cruelty of life, as caused by man's selfishness, are mercilessly exposed. *Bel-Ami* shows how, by an unchecked exercise of these vices, a man may rise, as Society is at present constituted in France, from the lowest to the most high degree. *Bel-Ami*, it may be added, was not a creation, but a portrait from life. The original of George Duroy still looms large in Tout-Paris. Only a few days ago I saw him pass down the Champs-Élysées in a superb carriage. He decries motoring as the sport of the vulgar.

If the truth were known, I believe that in his pictures of Norman peasants de Maupassant, who was a Norman himself and was passionately attached to a province, with the oldest families of which he was

connected by blood, did not at all posture as a censor. I think that the cunning and greed, the piratical rapacity of his types appealed now to his sense of humour, now to his admiration for the qualities which made of the Normans the masters of the world. He very cynically admitted towards the end his own love of gain. In his madness his ravings were entirely about money.

His portrayals of Norman peasants will not strike as overdrawn anyone who has lived in that province. Only the other day a doctor in the small country town in Normandy where I pass my summers told me an anecdote about one of his clients, a Norman peasant, which made me exclaim, "Oh! that de Maupassant could hear that!"

This doctor, several years ago, performed upon a man who had been abandoned by the first physicians in Paris an operation of the most delicate nature. At the time, when he first saw the man, the physicians told him that an operation must kill him; that it was best to leave him to his fate; and that he had expressed the intention, to escape his horrible sufferings, to put an end to his existence.

"I replied," said the doctor, "that if the man had to die, it would be better that he should die under our hands than by self-destruction, and I duly performed the operation. My colleagues seemed to think it very presumptuous of a young, inexperienced practitioner, as I then was, to dictate to them; but as they had given the patient up, I felt justified in acting. The operation was entirely successful, and the man recovered.

"Well, some days ago he called on me, and told me that now he was getting too old to work he had come to see what I was going to do for him. I asked him

what he meant, and he said: 'That operation which you performed on me fifteen years ago must have done you a lot of good in your profession. I know that it was much talked about, and that accounts of it appeared in the Paris papers. Now, it seems to me, that as I helped you along in your profession, and as you are doing so well, you ought to remember who gave you your first start, and provide for me, now that I can't earn my own living. I really think you ought to settle an annuity on me.'

"The man was quite in earnest," the doctor added; "and he came several times to try to convince me of the justice of his claim."

In his later works, such as *Notre Cœur* and *Fort Comme La Mort*, not to mention others, which seem to have been written entirely for commercial purposes, de Maupassant, it is true, laid the lash aside. It is true, also, that success did not follow him in his new departure. Critics used to express their wonder that, knowing his attitude towards life and mankind, he should ever have essayed to explain a happiness which he had always denied. "It is one thing," they said, "to analyse vice, and another to show the psychology of love. Love is of so rare and delicate an essence that it cannot be touched with the scalpel."

As a matter of fact, those who knew the intimacies of Guy de Maupassant's life, knew of a love story in which he had shown himself the most impassioned of wooers, and of lovers the most ardent and faithful. It was my privilege to have in my hands a collection of love-letters written by him, and I sometimes regret that I did not consent to make use of them for publication. They would have taken their place amongst the finest letters which have been given to the world. They were

models of the style, and I do not think that de Maupassant ever surpassed in any of his works the beauty of this prose.<sup>1</sup>

These letters were offered to me at a time when I was thinking of writing a biography of de Maupassant, in which I was to have had the advantage of Monsieur Hugues Rebell's collaboration. I decided, however, that it would be difficult to find any public in England for a book about a French novelist who was first introduced into England through the agency of the Holywell Street booksellers. As to the love-letters, undoubtedly they would have added many splendid pages to my book; but I had not forgotten what many of us thought, and what one expressed in undying verse, when Keats's love-letters were brought to the hammer. These letters of de Maupassant, it may be hoped, will remain amongst the unknown writings of their author, as high in a degree of excellence as the work which he used to publish, for sheer love of gain, under the name of *Maufrigneuse*, was low and unworthy.

I remember that on one of the first occasions on which I met him, I showed him a London Society paper which contained, signed by a well-known lady novelist, as an original story from her pen, an adaptation of one of his *contes*, which followed the original so closely as to be a mere translation. I told him what was the fact, that his work was being shamelessly pillaged by the pirates. He shrugged his shoulders, and referring to the lady in question, said, "Est-elle au moins jolie?" He added, "Ils le sont rarement, les bas-bleus." Towards the end, however, he developed very keen business qualities, and one of his last acts, before his fateful visit to the

<sup>1</sup> Guy de Maupassant's correspondence with Marie Bashkirtseff, who had addressed him anonymously, should be remembered.

South of France, was to expose an act of piracy by which he had been victimised.

As I had the advantage of knowing Doctor Blanche, the celebrated physician who kept the private *maison de santé* where de Maupassant was treated after they brought him back from the South, I was able to keep myself informed of the progress of his malady. Alas! at no time was the news reassuring. I used to meet Doctor Blanche on the boulevards—one of the very few distinguished Parisians I have ever met on the boulevards—and we stopped and spoke of the illustrious patient.

I was never very easy during these interviews, because Doctor Blanche, like many men whose minds are much occupied, had the habit, after taking one's hand in salute, of forgetting to carry out the motion of greeting. He gripped one's hand, more firmly than otherwise, and kept hold of it. This was also the custom of the late James Blaine, the ex-Secretary, who on one occasion kept me for fully sixty seconds with my hand locked in his, as though we were posturing before a camera. In Blaine's case this gave no cause for special anxiety, but I confess that when Doctor Blanche, the mad-doctor, held me thus in custody, his eyes fixed upon my face, a feeling of some uneasiness used to steal over me. I wanted to listen to what he was saying to me, but I also wanted him to release my hand. The absurd idea beset me that he would suddenly tighten his grip, and, dragging me into his brougham, transport me to Passy, the *petite maison* and the padded cell. I am quite certain that even the strongest-minded man might feel some qualms in the presence of so reputed a pathologist under such circumstances.



Poor de Maupassant's madness ran its usual course. He imagined himself the possessor of boundless wealth. His talk was all of millions and billions and trillions. He wanted to dig holes in which to bury his immense accumulations of gold. He shouted into an imaginary telephone orders to his stockbroker to buy the French Rentes *en bloc*. At times, flying into mad passions, he would dash round and round the room in pursuit of some phantom thief. The only mercy that was shown to him was that he died in one of these terrible paroxysms. He died while he still had the semblance and the bearing of a man. His friends were spared the spectacle of that awful degradation into a condition lower than anything in animal life, to which general paralysis where it runs its whole sacrilegious course, brings its victims. There was no very great change in his appearance when he died. Somebody who saw him after his death said to me, "He looks like a soldier who has died on the field of battle."

He certainly bore some resemblance to the popular military type, with his hair cropped *à la* Bressan, his thick moustache, and the scrupulous neatness of his attire. He was always anxious to disassociate himself by his personal appearance and dress from the extravagances and Bohemianism of the professional *homme de lettres*. And though he would not have liked the comparison, I think that it may be said that, as when he was struck down, he was in full literary activity, Guy de Maupassant died *au champ d'honneur*



## CHAPTER V

Dumas *fils* and Dumas *père*—Dumas *fils* and Jules Verne—His Curiosity about Modern Paris—The Little Old Woman on Two Sticks—Margu rite Li nard at Home—A Midnight Conversation—The Observations of a Professional Beggar—Her Long Career—The Two Communards, Father and Son—Those that Disappear—The Dead who walk again.

IT was difficult for me to realize, as I sat talking that evening with the polished and urbane Alexandre Dumas, that this was the son of that Alexandre Dumas of whom Hippolyte Taine, in the conversation to which I have already alluded, spoke to me in the following terms : “ Dumas *p re* ? Ah, poor Dumas ! An immense genius, but not possible as a member of the French Academy. It would not have been his place, nor would he have been at ease there. Dumas had much of the negro in his exuberant temperament—a Bacchus, a Silenus, a volcano, a fountain, *  jet continu*, making fortunes and devouring them, producing books by the hundred, taking here and giving there, at rest never, a spirit of unrest if there ever was one. He was a man,” concluded Taine, speaking very pompously, “ whom it was most difficult to admit to an institution where a certain equanimity of temperament is an indispensable qualification.”

That conversation had not taken place at the time of my first visit to the house in the Avenue de Villiers ;



*Photo by Pierre Petit & fils, Paris.*

ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS.



but Taine's description of the elder Dumas only repeated what I had heard of him on every side. Dumas *filis*, I should say, must have appealed to Taine and his brother academicians as the very type of the writer who, in their jargon, is *académisable*. He was a man of most distinguished manners, agreeable in voice, apparently modest, certainly courteous, soberly elegant in his dress. In him the man of letters disappeared behind the man of the world. He had that winning and studied manner which used to distinguish the diplomatists of the tradition of Talleyrand or Metternich. Nothing either in his appearance or his temperament betrayed the infusion of negro blood. He was more Parisian than the Parisians. I found him a kind and obliging man during the eleven years that our acquaintance lasted. He frequently rendered me small services, and very shortly before his death, although at that time he was already ailing, he wrote me a long letter—it was over eight pages in length—to give me some information for which I had asked.

He had none of de Maupassant's reluctance to "talk literature," and that evening he rather closely questioned me on what French books I had read. He was unaffectedly pleased when I told him what a veneration we have in England for his father's books, and he said more than once, "Ce bon père! Ce grand Dumas!"

I must have omitted to speak of Jules Verne, for at one time he said that he was surprised I had not read these "marvels." I at once told him of the immense popularity that Jules Verne enjoys in England, and indeed surprised him with my account of the enthusiasm of the Anglo-Saxon boy for this author's stories. He said, "I wonder if Jules knows that? You ought to

go to Amiens and tell him. He is a modest, diffident man." Then he added, "I am trying to get the Academy to recognise his merits. I am pushing his claims to be admitted. But why will he live *au bout du monde*? Why does he live in Amiens? 'Les absents ont toujours tort,' and the fault that they find with him is that his style is bad, that he has no style, as if that were not a contradiction in itself. To have no style is to have a good style. Dumas had no style. I have no style. Style is a necessity only to the writer who has nothing to say."

He showed me where he had written his name in Lady D—— N——'s birthday-book, and, turning over the pages of the little volume, read out some of the aristocratic and royal names which were inscribed thereon. "You had better not ask Jules to write his name here," he said, "for he is a modest, retiring man. But if you are collecting autographs in Paris you should take it, a few doors off, to Arsène Houssaye. He would be delighted," he added, with the only faint indication of a sneer which I ever saw on his lips, "to figure amongst company so illustrious."

He then asked me what I was doing in Paris, and when I told him that for the time being I was seeing everything that the wonderful city could show me, he exclaimed, "How happy you foreigners are! You have time to see Paris, to study Paris. One must be an Englishman or an American to ascend the Vendôme column or to read the inscriptions in Notre Dame. We Parisians know nothing of Paris! Of many of our monuments we know no more than that they exist. And more than the monuments, the types of Paris, the hundred marvellous types of Paris! How few of us trouble to study them! There is Zola, who is building

up a fortune and a fine reputation by doing what we have all neglected to do, studying the types of Paris, like De Nittis, whose atelier is close to my house, who is teaching us the beauties of Paris as landscapes. These men are undoubtedly in the right."

He went on to say that the beggars of modern Paris, the "Cour des Miracles" of the day, would form a most interesting study, and he added, "For instance, that old lady who for as long past as I can remember has sat at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines, just where one turns off to go to the Rue de la Paix. You must have seen her. She has two wooden legs, which she stretches out on the pavement before her. She does not beg, but pretends to sell key-rings. I have often wished to stop and ask her to tell me her story. It should be most interesting. What things that woman must have seen! What stories she could tell of Paris! She has been sitting there for years. But possibly she is no observer. She may all the time be calculating her gains and considering what investments she will make. So few people are good observers. We notice that in modern literature."

"One could hardly expect blue stockings on the lady in question," I ventured. "She would hardly have any use for them. Her wooden legs are her *raison d'être*."

He laughed, and then he said, "That is the kind of thing you ought to study in Paris. You should go after the *document humain*, as they call it now. Tell me, will you go and find out all about this old lady, so that when we next meet you can give me her story? I was not joking when I said that I have been greatly interested in her, and have often wanted to talk to her. I have an idea—it might be useful."

I do not know what it was that prevented me from



carrying out the suggestion of Dumas *fiils*, but it was not until six years later that I made the acquaintance of the "little old woman on two sticks" in her own home. She did not encourage conversation with me on the boulevard. It might cause a crowd to gather, she used to say, when I tried to get her to talk at her place of business, which was with her back to the corner of the fine confectionery shop at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines. I met the old lady near her home one night in May of 1890 under curious circumstances.

It was a wet night, and the hour was midnight. I had happened to go out to Batignolles, and was walking down the sombre alley known as the Passage Cardinet. The silence was oppressive; but when I had got about half-way down the passage a curious noise began to make itself heard—Tack! tack! tack!—like the regular fall of an iron hammer on the pavement. What could it be? On it came. Tack! tack! tack! Then in the vague light of a distant lamp a curious silhouette became visible against the dark background; curious, because as far as the knees it was the figure of a woman, but from the knees to the ground it was only space, broken by two thin lines. One might have said that it was the figure of a woman with the fleshless tibia of a skeleton. At times these two dark lines became invisible, and then the woman seemed to sway along in the air at a distance of about two feet from the ground. The tack! tack! tack! became louder and louder. When the figure had come within twenty yards, I could see that it was the form of an old woman, on wooden legs, labouring along, a stick in one hand and an umbrella in the other. A minute later I had recognised her. It was the woman who had so interested Alexandre Dumas the Younger—that strange, sphinx-

like old woman who, year in, year out, sat at the corner of the Opera Square in Paris, an object of curiosity, if not of compassion, to every passer-by.

“Ah! *bon soir!*” I said, as she came up. “You almost frightened me. Your footfalls sound strange in this deserted street. What on earth brings you out into this part of Paris at this hour of the night?”

“This part of Paris?” she cried. “You mustn’t speak disrespectfully of the *Plaine des Batignolles*. Don’t you know that we are within a stone’s throw of the *Avenue de Villiers*, where all the great artists live?”

It was quite true. I had forgotten the fact. As we were standing there we were within about ten minutes’ walk of Dumas’s house.

“I live here,” said the old woman, “and have lived here, in the *Passage Cardinet*, for five years. And I shall live here many years more unless my landlord turns me out, as he is threatening to do.”

“Why so?”

“My rent is 270 francs, so I ought to have given him 67 francs 50 centimes. Instead of this I only gave him 10 francs, and he was indignant, and said that unless I paid him before the end of the month, he would put me into the street, wooden legs or no wooden legs. Ah, sir, why are we not living under the good King Louis Philippe, when for the same money that I am paying now for two miserable rooms I could have had a kitchen, a dining-room, two bedrooms, a cellar, and a *grenier*? That was the happy time in France for people of small means.”

“But,” I said, “this is nonsense. You are very rich. You are a well-known person in Paris. You sit at the world’s centre, and every passer-by pays tribute to you.”

She stamped one of her wooden feet indignantly on the pavement.

"It's lies!" she cried. "It's all lies. It's lies like these that have ruined me. Everybody thinks that I am very rich, and nobody gives me anything just for that reason. They started a lie years ago about my owning house property." Then interrupting herself, she added: "But it's no use our standing here. I run the risk of catching cold by getting my feet damp. Walk towards my house with me."

As we walked along I could not help wondering at the great dexterity with which the crippled, old woman strode along.

"You walk as easily as I do."

She laughed.

"It would be curious," she said, "if, after sixty-seven years' exercise on these stilts of mine, I couldn't walk. I was born with my legs paralysed. I have my legs, my calves, and my feet just the same as you have, but they are bent up at the knee. I kneel on my wooden legs.

"But here we are at my house," she said, pulling at the bell of a house before which she had halted.

I pressed a gold coin into her hand, and I said, "You must let me come in and tell me your story. It interests me greatly."

"Oh, I have no objection to your coming in," she said. "I have watched you on the boulevards long enough, and I take you for a serious young man. But I have little to tell you and less to show.

"I live on the ground-floor," she said, after we had entered the house, "on account of my legs. It is not the Rothschilds' hotel, *chez moi*."

It certainly was not, but the room into which she ushered me was very clean and tidy. In one corner

stood a comfortable bed ; a bright oilcloth was on the table in the centre of the room.

“ This is my house property in Paris,” she said with a laugh, waving her stick round the room. “ These are my landed estates. It is not Peru, as you can see, but it is clean and tidy. If you ask me what I am proudest of in the world, it is that.” And she pointed to the wall behind her bed.

I looked, and saw, side by side, no less than nineteen photographs, each in its little frame. There were three rows of them.

“ My husband and my children,” she said. “ I had eighteen children.

“ You have lost them ?”

“ They are all dead but three,” she said—“ two sons and a daughter. My younger son lives with me ; my daughter is married. The elder son is in the South of France. I was married at the age of fifteen ; but I was a fine young woman at that age, as fine as most women of twenty, as they are nowadays. My husband was a journeyman baker. He married me because of my wooden legs. It was a capital dowry, for I was already well known in Paris, and good year and bad year together they were worth about 2,000 francs a year. I made my *début* at the age of eight—on March 17th, 1831. At first I used to sell flowers ; then I learned the violin and played it.”

“ Then you have been a public figure in Paris——”

“ For fifty-nine years. I have sat where you have seen me sitting for the last twenty years. If I were to tell you all that I have seen, you would want a paper as big as from here to the boulevards to print it in.”

I asked her what might be the average of her takings every day.

“If I were to say that seven francs is the average daily takings,” she said, “I should be speaking very cheerfully. Let us say six francs and tell no lies. Things are very bad just now. There are no rich people in Paris; at least, none such as I used to have for customers. There was a time when my affairs really did go well—but now! I made three sous to-day; some days I make nothing; and just now, as I have told you, I am on the eve of being turned out of my lodgings.

“The rich,” she continued, “are not worth what they were. They have no more generosity. All the money I now take is given by the poor—people who have suffered or who have seen suffering and know what it is. I sit all day with my back to one of the oldest and richest confectioner’s shops in the world. In the afternoons I see rich people driving up in their carriages with splendid horses. They get out, bursting with good food; they go into that shop, stuff themselves still fuller with the costliest dainties, spend without counting, and as they come out I jingle my key-rings and beat a tattoo on the pavement with my wooden legs. One would think that, being so rich and comfortable and so full of good things, they would be disposed to be charitable. Not a bit! Never a sou do I get from one of them.

“The Duc de Nemours is a personal friend of mine. He often comes and chats with me when he is in Paris. Don’t you think that a man like that could easily give a poor woman like me a hundred-franc note now and then, to help me pay my rent, to put things right, and make me feel comfortable at home? But *oh! la, la!* the generosity of the d’Orleans! I shall not be lying when I tell you that all his gifts put together, since I have known him, do not amount to one half of the coin



you have just given me. I wish," she added, "that your Prince of Wales walked on the boulevards. They say he is a kind-hearted man; but, *voilà*, he doesn't walk."

She told me that it was between eleven and twelve in the forenoon that she took most money from the public. "I usually make half my day's earnings in that hour. People are only generous to me from habit or from superstition. Superstition!—that is to say, that there are a number of people who think it will bring them good luck to be generous to me, and on the eve of some big race will give me small sums in the hope that it will help them to win."

I asked her whether she did not find it very dull sitting at her corner all day. She said that she passed the time reading; indeed, I rarely saw her without a paper in her hand.

"I like the feuilleton stories so much," she said, "especially those which are about unhappy loves. But there is nothing that I enjoy more in the day than Henri Rochefort's daily article in the *Intransigeant*."

While she was telling me this I had been looking at the portrait of her husband behind the bed on which I was sitting.

"Have you been long a widow?" I asked.

"Oh! poor Liénard! Did I tell you that my name was Liénard—Marguérite Augustina Liénard? My poor husband was killed in the Commune. My son, who was fighting on the side of the Communards, was engaged one evening in removing the dead on the boulevards. Suddenly he came across his father's corpse, and, curiously enough, the Communist who helped him to bring poor Liénard home afterwards became my son-in-law."



"Vous êtes grandmère, madame?" I said.

"No," she answered. "They had a little girl, but she died."

Before I took leave of Madame Liénard she was good enough to ask me about my prospects in life. She told me that she had often speculated in her mind on what might be my walk in life. Because I was clean shaven she had at first taken me to be a valet looking for a place; but then she had seen me in cabs and on the *terrasse* of the Café de la Paix opposite.

"I am a writer, madame," I said.

"Ah! that was good formerly. That was good under the king. It was a good trade under Louis-Philippe. But now everybody knows how to write, and there is nobody to whom to address petitions."

Madame Liénard understood me to be a public letter-writer. When I first came to Paris there were still a certain number of these scribes to be found in little sheds at the street-corners; and so also in those days were there carriers of water, who blew a horn and offered their services. These were picturesque people, swarthy men from Auvergne; and in the summer months it was pleasant and refreshing to meet them with their dripping buckets in the sultry streets, or to follow in their track up steep and stifling staircases, where each step was splashed and looked cool in the sweltering heat of all else.

They have all gone now, and many other of the picturesque types of old Paris have gone with them. Raffaelli just arrived in time to limn some of these once familiar figures which modern Paris shall never see again, extinct now as are the types of Daumier or of Gavarni. The *écrivain public*, such as Madame Liénard took me to be, still survives here and there in

Paris in remote quarters. His *échoppe* may be found near the prisons often. But he is not the confidential friend and adviser of the illiterate as he used to be. Too often he combines with the functions of letter-writer the less honourable trade of private detective. He has been suspected of giving information to the police, and, being a depository of the family secrets of his *quartier*, to have used this knowledge for extortion.

I never knew what became of Madame Liénard. In cities one has no curiosity as to those who disappear. One day one said, "*Tiens!* the old woman on sticks isn't at her corner," and one passed on. Some believed her to have retired to enjoy in splendour the *rentes* which she had amassed. Others fancied that she must be dead, "as it certainly was her turn to be." But nobody cared. For myself I preferred not to inquire. Life has taught me not to hunt after sad emotions, and it pleased me to believe that the son-in-law in the South of France, the Communard who brought the dead journeyman baker home to the woman whom he had married for the sake of her wooden legs, might have taken compassion on her lonely and miserable life, and have offered her a home in some sunny *bastide* amidst the vines. I used to picture her to myself sitting in the farmhouse kitchen during the long *veillées*, knitting by the resined tallow-dip, and relating to the eager villagers all the wonderful things that she had seen in Paris during the sixty odd years that she had shown her legs for a living.

And the fact is that many of the people who disappear from Paris and are supposed to have died under circumstances of exceptional sadness are found to be living quietly in retreat, enjoying a eupeptic and contemplative existence far from the crowd and the noise. Did I not one afternoon in a suburban tramway once meet the great

Hortense Schneider? Yes, the Duchess of Gerolstein, the Grand-Duchess of Gerolstein herself, dressed as a *petite bourgeoise*, with black filosele mittens where the the diamond bracelets used to be. She paid the conductor with coppers which she extracted one by one from a housekeeping purse, and she anxiously demanded her transfer ticket. She looked very respectable; she was plump and comfortable, like some prosperous middle-class grandmother who has lived a quiet and orderly life. I think she would have fainted if any indiscreet person had reminded her of the old imperial days and the *petits soupers* in that little house at the corner of the Rue Lesueur, facing the Avenue de l'Impératrice. Did not one hear also, quite recently it seems (though it is fifteen years ago), of the death at Nice of Alphonse Karr, who for close on twenty-five years had disappeared from the boulevards; and did we not all re-echo at the news the words of Alexander Dumas on a similar occasion and cry, "Quoi? Encore?" ("What? Again?")

These people who disappear while it is yet time from the turmoil of the town are the wise people of the world. Paris, if it knows of the retreat of such a one, smiles and says, "Il fait son petit Cincinnatus," as though that were the most foolish thing that a man could do. How greatly preferable is such an existence to that living death which is led by so many, who, having lost their health, their fortunes, their powers, persist in walking the streets, in haunting the pleasure-places, pale phantoms of their former selves. I remember once in the Café Royal in London asking a friend of mine who an old man was whom I always saw there in the afternoons and evenings, who appeared to have few friends, to be lonely, and from the way the waiters spoke to him, poor. "Oh, that is——," said my friend.

“In his lifetime he was a great painter, a true artist. Then he died, but came back afterwards, and now he sits in the Café Royal all day and most of the night, drinking little glasses of brandy. What a pity it is,” he added, “that dead men will come back and persist in showing themselves, just to pretend that they are alive, when everybody knows the contrary!” Those words have often occurred to me in Paris as I have seen drifting past me in the streets, or crouching in forlorn attitudes in the public resorts, men who once filled the town with the exuberance of their lives. And perhaps never did I recall them with more poignant anguish than when many years later it fell to me to witness this living death of the very man who spoke those words.

## CHAPTER VI

The Modern "Cour des Miracles"—Bibi-la-Purée—A Survivor of the Middle Ages—His Mode of Life—His Friendship for Verlaine—His Last Impersonations—The Old Pole—A King Lear of the Gutter—The Adventures of Fenine—"La Revendication Individuelle"—Our Last Tryst—An Englishman in Paris—A Harboured Resentment—The Lady who called.

**I**NDEED, there was no necessity for me to explore Paris (as Dumas had suggested) in search of the Cour des Miracles. This, since the days which Victor Hugo pictured in his *Notre Dame de Paris*, has left its cantonments and has spread itself all over the city. In the course of a life such as mine, which took me to all kinds of places, and which brought me into contact with all kinds of people, I have met in Paris so many and such curious types of the class to which the novelist drew my attention, that I can people in fancy a Cour des Miracles fully as weird as that mediæval *lazaretto* of which Paris still speaks with a shudder. With this difference: my Cour des Miracles exhibits no sores, no twisted limbs, no horrid ailments.

To the outward eye my adventurers appear much like other people, a little more shabby doubtless, but otherwise difficult to differentiate at a cursory glance from the first man in the street. Yet in their way of life, in the resources of their existence, in their moral character, they entirely resemble their less hypocritical fore-runners of the Middle Ages. They will not work;

they never have worked; their capacity and desire for enjoyment are enormous.

I was very well acquainted for years with that extraordinary person Bibi-la-Purée. Of him it may be said that he seemed a survival of the Middle Ages. His home, had he ever had one, should have been in the Rue de la Grande Truanderie. If he had lived in the Middle Ages he would have been hanged. He had not, like Villon, the talents which appealed to a clever king and twice saved the poet's neck from the halter. Bibi-la-Purée's real name was André Salis, and he was very proud of the fact that he was a nephew of the Abbé Salis who gave evidence in the Tichborne trial, and who had been tutor to the real Sir Roger. He was the son of a *marchand de vins* in Angoulême, and so belonged to what the French call a respectable family, but for many years before his death he had cut himself adrift from all his relations, and the only remnant of his former social position consisted in an annuity of three hundred francs, which he used to draw at an insurance office four times a year.

In the Latin Quarter, which was largely his sphere of activity, a mistaken belief prevailed that he was a student of law, who having eternally failed in his examinations could not tear himself from the scenes of his academic struggles. We all knew the *étudiant de quinzième année*; here was the *étudiant de trente-cinquième*. But this was not the case. Bibi-la-Purée was a student only in the University of Life.

On the quarter-days on which he used to draw his annuity it was not an unusual experience of mine for Bibi-la-Purée to drive up to my house with a huge bouquet in his hand and to beg me to accompany him as his guest. It was, it appeared, a point of honour



with him that that same night every penny of his seventy-five francs should be spent—"bouffé" he used to call it. And though I never accompanied him on any of these occasions, I used otherwise to see a great deal of this strange, old man, more, perhaps, than was good for my reputation as an *homme sérieux*; and I remember being asked one night by a commissary of police who was inquiring into my identity why I chose such a companion for excursions into the lower depths of Paris. I answered that it was difficult, not to say impossible, to find sub-prefects who were ready to accompany one after midnight. If I had cared to explain, I should have said that the study of Bibi-la-Purée was as interesting a psychological treat as humanity had ever offered me. Yes, Bibi-la-Purée, who now had the face of Voltaire and now of Louis XI. (the very monarch who would have hanged him in his true period) took one straight back to the Middle Ages.

I had often regretted that it had not been my lot to live in the days of François Villon, that I had not met that strange poet-thief; and in Bibi-la-Purée one found a Villon, or perhaps rather a Gringoire, walking the streets of Paris at the close of the nineteenth century. Not indeed that he had any literary attainments. Indeed, his only *attaches* to literature were his preference for the society of writers, his long friendship with and devotion to the Poet Verlaine, and a superficial knowledge of what the young men of the Parisian Parnassus were writing. But in his manner of life, in his disregard of social conventions, in his hatred of the police, in his constant difficulties with the *gens de la justice* he walked the streets of Paris, pilfering and light of heart, a Villon *redivivus*. Even as Villon or

Gringoire, he had an utter detestation of the *bourgeois* qua *bourgeois*, and considered him, inasmuch as a Philistine, his natural prey.

In a eulogistic notice of Bibi-la-Purée which appeared in one of the papers, after his death in the Hôtel-Dieu, it was recorded to his credit that, unlike his prototypes, he was honest. This is not the case; and without his weakness for peculation, his character would have lost much in interest. As a matter of fact he had served one sentence of a year's imprisonment for stealing a brooch. On this occasion, as in all his other acts of larceny, he was prompted by no self-interest. He stole because it was in his nature to steal, just as a magpie pilfers. You had to grasp this fact if you wished to enjoy his society, that, like the Taffy of the nursery-rhyme, Bibi was a thief, and you had to take your precautions accordingly.

Whenever, having met him homeless in the midnight streets of Paris, I had given him a night's shelter in my house, I was always careful before parting with him in the morning to empty his pockets of such trifles as he had purloined during my sleep. What he stole—and he was always stealing—was immediately presented to one of his friends. For instance, he often used to leave parcels for me at my concierge's—an umbrella, some books “collected” at the second-hand stalls on the quays, and on one occasion he left a clock. His speciality, however, as I have mentioned above, was the stealing of umbrellas; and when he entered a *café* in the Latin Quarter or in Montmartre, you saw everybody rushing for his *parapluie*. It was understood that this was one of his amiable weaknesses, and nobody, I am sure, ever thought of informing against him. His talents in this direction were exercised much on behalf of his friend the poet Verlaine, when that

great man was dying of want and sickness in his miserable garret in the Rue St. Victor. Here the magpie displayed the amiable qualities of the raven in the Bible story. There was something very touching in this association of the genius and the imbecile, of whom one had the outward appearance and the other the sweetest gifts of the mediæval poet, who, like each of them, had suffered all that Paris offers of suffering, like each of them had lain in gaol. It is recorded that at Verlaine's funeral, at which Bibi-la-Purée represented *la famille*, and led the procession of mourners, he managed to gain felonious possession of the umbrella of François Coppée.

He had no domicile, he had no means of existence, and no property beyond the ragged finery in which he walked about. He was in perpetual masquerade. He usually wore a high hat, and never went abroad without a huge bouquet in his ragged frock-coat. One day I sent him to dispose of a quantity of odds and ends which I was clearing out. There was a pair of spurs, relics of my Melton days, amongst this lumber, and, item, an antique helmet. He was to dispose of these at a second-hand shop at Montmartre, and he was to bring me back the money, for that night my purse was empty. But I saw no more, that dinnerless evening, of this fraudulent bailee. I heard, however, that he had been seen in various parts of Paris wearing my spurs on his heels, his head covered with the antique helmet. In the tails of his frock-coat he carried a pair of blacking-brushes; but his skill in the art of polishing boots was exercised rather for the benefit of his personal friends than for personal gain. You asked Bibi-la-Purée to take a bock, and after he had drunk it he would kneel down in front of everybody in the *café* and vigorously black your boots.

In any other country—indeed, in almost any other

town than humane and tolerant Paris—Bibi-la-Purée would have spent his life in prison. In England he would have been “dealt with” as an incorrigible rogue and vagabond. Yes, I am afraid that at Quarter Sessions they would have ordered poor Bibi to be birched. In Paris the picturesque harmlessness of his character was so well understood that the very magistrates of the Correctional Police used to treat him with the greatest leniency. He was frequently brought before them for insulting the police, against whom he harboured all the hatred that was entertained for the *guet* in the Cour des Miracles. Now in France it is a most serious offence to address “outrages” to a policeman in the execution of his duty. It may entail a sentence of one year’s imprisonment. Bibi was always lightly punished, even on the famous occasion when he was found clambering into Monsieur Thiers’s house on the Place St. Georges, and had to be removed to the police-station in a wheel-barrow, inveighing against the police all the way, and clamouring for the halcyon days of the Republic under *le petit Foutriquet*.

He died, as Gervaise died, of exposure and want and privation. Tuberculosis was the direct cause, and his last days in the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital were easy. He remained a buffoon to the last, and the very evening of the night on which he died he was masquerading up and down the ward, bringing smiles to lips as blanched as his own. Dying, he, the beggar, enacted for these beggars on their death-bed the many trickeries which had been their trade in life. In the penumbra of the long room he mimicked for men who had reached their last infirmity the mock infirmities by which they had wrung compassion and largesse from the world which they were leaving. He turned back his eyelids and

parodied the blind. He doubled back his hand and showed a polished stump. He feigned the man who is palsy stricken, and amidst the coughing cachinnations of his audience of experts he played the canting beggar who dupes the pious at the doors of churches. He went out of a world which had not been kind to him, triumphant and mocking to his last breath. He died with the *Vos plaudite* of the Roman clown expressed in the grin of his lantern jaws. The papers recorded his death as a matter of public interest, told the story of his life, and spoke gently of his foibles.

Another of my strange acquaintances in Paris was that fine, aristocratic old man who for years used to be seen in the end room of the Café de la Paix every night of the year, writing, correcting proofs, and wielding a rubber stamp. He was an object of curiosity to all who saw him there for the first time, and I think that many times a day the waiters were asked about him. In spite of his shabby attire he was evidently *quelqu'un*. Indeed, he had the appearance which the general hold to be the type of the highest nobility. Some thought him a king in exile, and truly he was Lear in his fall.

His name was Wladislas Izycki; he was of a noble Polish family. There *is* a Polish nobility, in spite of the fact that every rascal Pole that one meets away from his country claims to be of aristocratic birth. I am not sure that Izycki was not the identical *vieux Polonais* of François Coppée's story. It is certain that he had been finally ruined at the Paris gambling-tables, and that for years he had haunted the clubs and begged of successful gamblers the trifle which should permit him to try his luck once more. He had been a man of immense fortune. He had all the extravagance and all the folly of the Polish aristocrat. His generosity was unbounded; his



contempt for money, in the old days, unparalleled even amongst his countrymen. It was told of him that when he came of age his brothers complained that, though the eldest son, the *zamek*, or family mansion, should have been left to him by their father. Had not each one of them an equal right to it? These recriminations distressed him, and he determined to bring them to an end. The method he chose was characteristic. He invited them to his estate on a given day, and when they arrived they found their brother waiting to greet them under a tent. The palace of their ancestors had been razed to the ground, and the earth levelled. “I hope that we shall now no longer quarrel about the possession of the castle,” he said to his brothers. His follies and extravagance were at one time the talk of Europe. He freighted a steamer once to convey him across the Atlantic because he was anxious to be present at the *début* at Chicago of a ballerina for whom he had a kindness, and had missed the boat by which she had sailed. He would have appealed to Ouida in her early days. In Paris he had for a brief season been the talk of the gambling-clubs. Some of the banks that were held by Wladislas Izycki are still discussed by the Greeks of Europe with watering mouths.

The catastrophe was not long in coming. A final blow was dealt to his fortunes by the dishonesty of a steward, by which he was robbed of his remaining estates in Poland. It was then that he began to figure, if not as the real *vieux Polonais* who inspired Coppée’s tale, at least in a similar part. One by one the clubs shut their doors on him. From one house where in his prosperous days he had lost a million francs he was ejected by the police. He was more than once arrested for begging, and, I believe, spent some days in prison in consequence.



Afterwards he had attracted the attention of the boulevards by parading Paris dressed in sky-blue clothes, carrying a red parasol, and distributing prospectuses. In the days when I came to know him he was living by playing the flute in an orchestra in a small café-concert in Montmartre. When he lost this employment he took to writing begging letters. He knew to a centime what were the charities of all the rich people in Paris. His delight in life was to be able to sit in the Café de la Paix, where he drank coffee and smoked cigarettes and wrote his petitions.

One day he told me that he had hit upon an idea for making large sums of money. He had written and caused to be printed a little four-page pamphlet in Russian. It was a grotesque exposition of his Socialistic views, accompanied by a description of his own woes. His name and address were printed at the bottom, with the mention that the price of his pamphlet was not less than one franc. These papers he used to embellish with the impress of a rubber stamp which he had designed. The design, he explained, was the key of his system of philosophy. It represented a hand with the fingers and thumb outspread. Each finger bore on it the name of one class of workers, *ouvrier, fabricant, artiste*. He said that the producers were the only people who ought to be allowed to live in a well-ordered state, and he called his system *la doigtologie*. He afterwards added, in the centre of the hand, a picture of his eldest son. He spent his time in the Café de la Paix stamping these pamphlets and addressing them to all the celebrities who visited Paris. I used to hear from him of the success of his publications and could have annotated my copy of the *Almanach de Gotha* as the beggar's true guide. It appears that the King of Greece was always 'good for a louis,' and Izycki came to look upon the Hellene dole as part of his income.

There were granddukes and granddukes : this one used to send ten roubles ; this other left the missive unnoticed.

As long as he confined himself to addressing his public through the post, the picturesque old man was not interfered with by the managers of the *café*. But the time came when he thought to give extension to his affairs by handing round his leaflets amongst likely customers. It was his ill-fortune one day to hand one in which there were some coarse pleasantries about the Russian police to a high official of the Petersburg Central Office. This person at once complained to the management, and poor Izycki received his *congé*. I think that this final humiliation broke his heart. I saw him later shuffling about the boulevards, and, when the police were not looking, this fine old man would stretch out his hand for alms.

The very last time on which I saw him he came up to me from behind, and, without a word, held out his hand. I took his arm and asked him how he was faring' and where he lived. He laughed and said, "Under the Pont-Neuf. Come and see me." Some days later I heard that he had been found dead in the small room to which I had assisted him. It was cold weather, and he had piled all the furniture in the room on his bed to add to the warmth of the blankets. He left nothing behind him but many hundreds of empty matchboxes and a great number of letters from charitable people. There were kings and emperors amongst his correspondents, and the letters would have been estimated a prize by many collectors of autographs. They were, however, impounded by the police, lest they should fall into the hands of some other professional writer of letters.

It was Izycki who introduced me to another of the waifs of Paris, a man of whom I often think with pity and regret. This was a Russian officer named Fenine, under sentence of death in Russia, and for years a fugitive in France. He had been reared at the College of Nobles in Petersburg, and was the son of a Russian officer whose name is still proverbial for its honesty in the Empire. He was blind of one eye, and had the Kalmuk type, presenting altogether as strong a contrast with the aristocratic-looking Pole, Izycki, as one notices often between Poles and Russians. I am always struck with this racial difference when I compare two photographs which stand in my study, the portrait of Henryk Sienkiewicz and that of Fedor Dostoïewski. All his life Fenine had been filled with libertarian impulses, and as an officer, quartered in Warsaw, he put himself on the side of the oppressed.

He was mixed up in one of the recurrent conspiracies in that city of disquiet; the conspiracy was, as usual, made known to the police, and Fenine was forced to fly for his life. "I was in total ignorance," he used to tell me when relating this passage in his life, "that we had been betrayed, and one afternoon was walking home to my house. I had reached the corner of my street, when a man who had passed me turned back, caught me by the arm, and whispered, 'Are you Lieutenant Fenine?' He then said, 'Don't go home. The plot has been discovered, and the police are hiding in your room to arrest you.' So I turned round on my heel and had to face the world again. I was in uniform; I had barely a couple of roubles in my pocket; a price was set upon my head; the hounds were at my very heels. In the shortest possible time I had to find a disguise, to obtain money for my flight, and to get outside the gates of

Warsaw. I succeeded in all these things, and my luck was marvellous. The town had been declared in a state of siege, and every exit was closely watched. The sentry at the gate by which I made for freedom was my own orderly. I have never known to this day whether he recognised me or not. At any rate, I was allowed to pass. I tramped through Poland on foot. It was not till I had got a good way into Germany that my friends were able to send me a little money, and I could take the train. I reached Strasburg unmolested; but at the very point of crossing over into the French part of the station the German soldiers stopped me. Who was I? Where were my papers? I gave myself up for lost. At that time the German police were only too glad to be able to render services to their Russian colleagues, and I should have been arrested and sent back to Warsaw, the court-martial, and the gallows. As a matter of fact, I had already been tried in my absence, and was sentenced to be hanged. However, a French abbé who was present interested himself in me. I told him in private, in a few whispered words, who I was and what I feared, and he contrived to persuade the German sentries to let me pass."

His life in exile had been one long period of want and suffering. The days had gone past when the Poles were welcomed to France. Young Floquet might cry out in front of the Czar, "Vive la Pologne, monsieur," and so found his political career; but the general public had had enough of the Revolutionary adventurers who made return for hospitality with every kind of treachery. The Wenceslas Steinbock of Balzac had come to be recognised as a true type, and the French citizen feared for his purse and his domestic honour. Again, poor Fenine was in the peculiar position that he was not

a Pole, but one of the race of their oppressors, and on his action, which, in fact, was dictated by a pure spirit of humanity and justice, an evil construction might be put. He was forced to gain his living in the hardest manual toil. For years he worked in an iron foundry, where he lost the sight of one eye through an accident. Amongst the declassed he was one of the most cruelly declassed; yet his love of humanity, his compassion for the sufferings of the poor never grew less.

When I made his acquaintance he was earning a miserable wage as occasional secretary to a rich Polish refugee, one of the very class which caused the downfall of their ancient kingdom; and poor Fenine, who had sacrificed in the cause of Poland his life, his honour itself, was forced to write at this man's dictation lying and vainglorious accounts of the heroic struggles of the Polish nobility, and "unutterably foolish" suggestions of the way in which Poland might yet be saved. He hated his employer as rarely one man ever hated another, and he used to pour into my ear the indignation with which he was inspired. I said to him on one occasion that it had been the misfortune of his life that he had always been obliged to accept employment from those with whose opinions he was entirely at variance; that circumstances, in other words, forced upon him the *rôle* of traitor.

When I knew him he had developed a very keen sympathy with Anarchist principles, though he was much too kind-hearted ever to countenance acts of cruelty. But with the theory of every man's right to practise *la revendication individuelle* he entirely agreed, and took delight in pilfering whenever the opportunity offered. One day he said to me, "I am so sorry. I wanted to give you an agreeable surprise;



but I don't think I shall be able to do it. The old wretch keeps too close a watch upon me." I asked him what he meant, and he explained that his employer possessed a very beautiful inlaid wood paperknife. "Just the thing," he added, "that would look nice on your writing-table. I made up my mind long ago to get it for you; but old D——, who is as cunning as he is mean, never lets me go out of his sight."

I engaged him to give me Russian lessons, and it is to him that I owe any knowledge of that language which I possess. But my education was gained under trying circumstances. Poor Fenine had the vice of many of his countrymen: he used to drink very hard. He often came to my house hopelessly intoxicated; but even then I was able to talk with him. What brought my Russian lessons to a close was that after a while he ceased coming at the appointed hour. I was very busy, and could only spare for the Russian lessons the hour between six and seven. It became quite a usual thing for me to have to wait till a quarter to seven without any news of my professor. At that time, generally, a man in an apron would come from some neighbouring wineshop and tell me that a gentleman was waiting for me at that establishment, and that my immediate attendance there was desired. On reaching the *café*, I used to find Fenine sitting behind a pile of saucers, representing as many glasses of absinthe, for which the landlord was holding him in pawn.

It was unfortunately impossible for me then, for want of time, to encourage these amiable eccentricities, and in the end our relations as pupil and teacher came to a close. But I used to see him constantly when he came to call on me, and I was always delighted

with the man's wonderful conversation and vast erudition. He had never been married, but he had an adoration for women, and his great grievance against the social system lay in the injustice which is meted out to them. He was collecting notes for a book which he proposed to write in re-vindication of woman's true position in society, and at the time of his death had collected an enormous mass of matter.

He used to live in a miserable garret in the Rue Visconti, of which it was rumoured in the quarter that it had once been the abode of the great Racine, and which was close to the house in which Balzac carried on that ill-fated printing business which, because he there bankrupted, closed the doors of the Academy against him for ever. Here he had a camp bedstead; he had no other furniture. Indeed, there was no room for anything else, for every other inch of space was filled with books, most of which had been collected on the principle of *la revendication individuelle*. There was no fireplace in the room, and in the bitter cold of the winter, the poor fellow used to burn paper in the middle of the stone floor, to thaw his frozen fingers.

He always carried a broken horseshoe with him—not for luck indeed, but as a weapon of defence. He was ever at war with the small dealers, whom he accused of adulteration and dishonesty. The *marchands de vins*, the tobacco dealers of his quarter, had all in turn to listen to his scathing remarks on the vileness of their deceptions. He used to imitate with his fingers, for their confusion, the gesture of a man who sprinkles water. The broken horseshoe, wielded by an orator of his Herculean strength, served to underline his arguments, and secured him liberty of speech.

A time came when I lost sight of him for some months. There had been a slight difference between us, caused by *la revendication individuelle*. I had seen in the papers that he had been in trouble because of his friendship for some militant Anarchists, and then silence had settled round his name. One day I received from him a letter saying that he was ill, and begging me to forget the trifling cause of our dissension. I at once wrote back and told him that as soon as I returned to Paris I would welcome him at my house. Some time afterwards I received from the Sister Superior at a convent in a remote part of Paris a letter saying that Fenine had been very pleased with my letter, but that he was too ill and "tired" to come and see me. He prayed I might visit him at the convent where he was being cared for by the holy women.

I was not able to go that same day; but on the morrow I took a cab and drove to the establishment. The horse was a bad one, and we made slow progress. The place, somewhere behind the Gare de Lyon, was a long way off my home, and we took just one hour reaching it. If that wretched horse had been able to cover the distance in only five minutes less time, I should have been spared a lasting and unsolaceable grief. I had to wait for a few moments after I had rung at the gates of the convent. When the door was opened and I had told the blue-hooded nun whom I had come to see, she answered: "Fenine is dead. He died just as you rang the door-bell. I have come from his bed." She took me to his side. I saw that the fingers of the poor gaunt hands that were crossed upon the white coverlid of the bed were stained with ink. I suppose that until almost the very end he had been working at the book which was to sound the tocsin of

woman's freedom. Well, there were kind women by him when he died.

I presume that Dumas *fils* moved in spheres too exalted, that his mansion was too well guarded; for, otherwise, surely he would not have needed to regret that time and opportunity had failed him to study the modern Cour des Miracles of Paris. It forces itself upon you at every step; the difficulty is to know how to avoid its emissaries. And great as may be one's kindness for humanity, it is sadly disappointing work to try to help most of the people whose miseries are thus obtruded upon him. They belong in the main to that class of which the Parisians humorously say that their position may be summed up in the words: "Pas d'argent, pas de position, mauvaise réputation et pas envie de bien faire." It is just that *pas envie de bien faire* that renders the task so hopeless. It is very rare indeed that one has the satisfaction of seeing one's efforts resulting in anything but most transitory benefit to those one wishes to help. I do not mean to say that there is no good in creating pleasing incidents in the lives of the destitute and forlorn. I hold, on the contrary, that the creator of any incidents is a benefactor—to the extent indeed that in the monotony of a country life I have sometimes felt actually grateful to the little wanton boy who has rung at my door and scurried off. He created an incident and broke with temporary excitement the terrible dulness of the moment. But one hopes to do more than to give momentary pleasure. One can feed the man buried in the mine through a tube, and no doubt it benefits him, but one would like to help him out and set him on his legs again. One very rarely succeeds, and the remembrance of such occasions is a pleasant one.

Once when I was living in a very poor way myself

in a hotel in the Rue Lepelletier, I heard that there was an Englishman occupying a room on the next floor. I was told that he was engaged in literary work, and I actually found myself envying him his employment. One day, however, the waiter asked me if I would not go and see my countryman, whom he described as being in a dreadful position. I clambered up a kind of ladder into a loft, and there was shown the door of the garret where the *compatriote* resided. It was a dark winter's evening, and when I had opened the door I found myself in black obscurity.

“Is there anybody here?” I asked.

A quavering voice answered me. I struck a match, and saw the most forlorn object. It was a man sitting on a broken-down bedstead, dressed in a ragged coat which was fastened round his body with a piece of cord. He told me that he had been without food for three days, that he was ashamed to go out into the streets dressed as he was. I was that night myself *impransus*; but there was an English insurance clerk in the same hotel, and he readily came to the rescue. We pawned his dress-clothes for three francs, and provided for the immediate want of our countryman. He was in a dreadful condition. His rent was months overdue, he had no work, he was without clothes, and he was affected with a loathsome and disfiguring skin disease. But he certainly had the *envie de bien faire*. He had come to France some years before the fall of the Empire, and had been engaged as a tutor in the house of one of the Court officials. He had seen the splendours of imperial days, and had been forced to contribute his scot towards the royal extravagance of his master, “who dined every week at the Tuileries.” After the war there was no more Tuileries; there were no more rich charges at Court. The English



tutor was turned out by his ruined masters without a halfpenny of long arrears of salary. When I came to hear of him he was entirely without employment; for some months previously he had subsisted by sending short news-paragraphs to the *Figaro*. Indeed, in former days his work had attracted the attention of the great de Villemessant himself; the editor had asked who it was who wrote such clever things in so apt a style about the doings in the streets of Paris, and, astonished to hear that they were the work of an Englishman, invited him to his table.

“But I had no clothes,” said my new friend, “and I was ashamed to go. So I missed making my fortune.”

After that the *Figaro* had been less hospitable. On many pay-days he had not had one halfpenny to receive for lineage; and hunger had often driven him out of nights down to the Central Markets, to prowl round there, even as Claude in the *Ventre de Paris*, in the vain hope of earning a few pence by helping the peasants to unload their carts.

When I got to know him better I found the man the very model of British honesty. He was most characteristically English. His loyalty to our Royal Family was such that, whenever the Prince came to Paris, he used to go down to the Place Vendôme and loiter about, to the alarm of the detectives, for the purpose of raising his hat to the heir-apparent of the British throne. His twenty years of Paris had not altered in a particle his sturdy British contempt for the French; even his Yorkshire accent had triumphed over the acquired tongue. He considered it his duty to his country to be as careful as possible about his personal appearance, and even when in rags used to carry a pair of gloves, of unrecognisable colour and riddled with holes. It was a difficult task to

drag this man out of the slough into which circumstances and a lack of all the aggressive qualities had plunged him, and it was years before I was able to help him finally to his feet.

The skin disease from which he suffered frightened people of him ; I had to insist at length on his amiable qualities before I could overcome this objection. I may conscientiously say that I worked hard and constantly for him. I was so interested in him that when one day he told me that the great sorrow of his life was that he had not seen his old father for twenty years, and that he feared lest he might die before he had the opportunity of visiting him, or rather before he had the means to pay his fare to the Yorkshire village where his people lived, I immediately bade him arrange to leave Paris the next day, and straightway took him over to England and landed him safely outside the Black Swan in York. His father died a fortnight after I had brought him back to Paris. Eventually he got together a good connection as tutor and as translator for patent agents, and came to do very well indeed. At the same time his manner became more and more distant towards me. He gave me to understand that he had much resented, at the time, my entering his room in the loft of the hotel in the Rue Lepelletier without knocking, and that really he had never forgiven such a breach of the common courtesies of life. His individualism was so pronounced that he often declared that the forlorn who contrive to induce more prosperous people to assist them have no need to feel gratitude. It is their superiority which helps them to best their benefactors. I learned, by the way, that some time before I paid for his journey to York and back he had inherited from an Oxford friend of mine, to whom I had introduced him, and who shot

himself, a sum of fifty pounds. He had never told me a word of this ; it was by pure accident that I heard it. I ran eagerly to communicate the good news to him, and, "Oh, yes, I had it!" he told me.

Emissaries from the Cour des Miracles were constantly calling at my house, until I removed my name from the annuary, *Le Tout-Paris*. I thus became acquainted with an extraordinary category of mendicants. In ingenuity and plausibility I am sure that no city can show impostors more efficient. The cleverness with which these people had constructed, on the narrow basis of the bald biographical facts which appeared next to my name in the annuary, a story which was likely to appeal to my compassion always filled me with admiring wonder. Unfortunately, I was very busy, and had not the time to listen to their tales. Men it was easy enough to get rid of ; but no doubt, because of this fact, the impostors tackled the ladies, and sent their womenfolk to visit the men.

I shall always remember an old lady who called on me one mail-day, just as I was sitting down to write, against time, an article for my American paper. She was very neatly dressed, and her manner was civil and insinuating. But almost her first words aroused my ire. She represented herself to be the daughter of a former correspondent of the *Times* who had never existed. I did very much object to listening to lies, when these had been fashioned with no artistry of verisimilitude. Besides, that day I was very busy. I requested the old lady to leave ; I told her that I was *très occupé*. She must remember how *feu monsieur son père* objected to being interrupted when in the throes of composition for the *Times*. She then prayed to be allowed to sit down. She felt faint, she said. I could not refuse this request, and turned once more to my writing-table. I had only

just the time in which to finish my task. My employer was not a man to allow himself to be disappointed by any of his correspondents. It was the hardest work to write with the old lady sitting there, for every now and then she gave a groan to remind me of her suffering presence. But I took no heed. She was too obvious an impostor. At last, as I was in the midst of an effective sentence, she rose to her feet, threw out her arms, and let herself slip backwards on to the floor. I knew that it was all a sham ; but I was naturally forced to go to her assistance. I tried to raise her ; she made herself heavy and kept slipping back into a recumbent position. I could see her eyes twinkling maliciously behind the half-closed lids. "C'est la faim," she muttered. In the end I put my hand into my pocket and produced a coin. At the sight of it she sprang to her feet, snatched the money out of my hand, and made for the door. Here she paused and cried out some words of triumph and derision. No, there is never any need in Paris to go in search of the Cour des Miracles.

## CHAPTER VII

Baron Haussmann—His Home, Rue Boissy d'Anglas—A Pen-Portrait—The Writing of his Memoirs—His Acknowledgment of Napoleon's Share in his Work—His Opposition to the Franco-Prussian War—Bismarck's Rude Reception at Biarritz—The Real Cause of the War—Haussmann's Political Opinions—The Story of his Career—His Last Words—Paul Deroulède and 'La Revanche'—Old Paris.

THE actual site of the mediæval Cour des Miracles was, as we know, in the neighbourhood of Notre Dame des Victoires, in one of the picturesque quarters of old Paris, which, under the Second Empire, were so ruthlessly swept away by Baron Haussmann. I must say that for some years after my arrival in Paris I bore at heart a grudge against this man. The Paris that I loved was the Paris that had not been "Haussmanised." I used to hunt out in midnight rambles such narrow streets, such gabled roofs, such memories of a more romantic age as the city could still afford. I still feel at times a revolt, and this in common with most Parisians, at the mournful monotony of the architecture which he imposed. The Boulevard Haussmann, for instance, at all times depresses him who passes along it. It is the very thoroughfare of stolid *ennui*.

But for the man himself, after I had come to know him, I felt nothing but respect, and I think that that opinion is now the general one in Paris. His name has been disassociated from what was unworthy in the administration to which he belonged. It is known that



he had no personal ambitions ; that he never sought to enrich himself. He took no part in any *Curée*, though the opportunity was offered to him of amassing, by speculations in house property, a most colossal fortune. It is a well-known fact that he laughingly declined the title of duke which Napoleon tried to force upon him. The Emperor desired to create him Duc de Paris, but Haussmann reminded him that there was a Count of Paris who had better claims to the appanage than he.

When I first arrived in Paris, in 1883, Haussmann was one of those celebrities who had disappeared in the way I have referred to in a previous chapter. Most people fancied that he was dead : he went nowhere ; his name never appeared in the gazettes. He was living in retirement in the heart of Paris, a disappointed, lonely, and unhappy old man. He was an irreconcilable opponent of the Republican form of government, and seemed to regret that he had outlived the disaster of Sedan and the 4th of September. It was only when the announcement appeared that his Memoirs were to be published—this was one year before his death—that people realized that the architect of modern Paris was still living in their midst. It was about this time that I first came to know him personally. The date of my first long conversation with him is one of those dates which one does not readily forget. It was February 21, 1890.

I had a warmly worded letter of introduction to the Baron, and but for it I do not think that I should have gained access to the old man, who then was a confirmed invalid. His door was closed to all except members of his family and his oldest friends. But my letter won me access to him. I never regretted the trouble that I had taken to obtain it.

I can see as clearly as though my visit dated but from yesterday the various details of the home of the man who had transformed the habitations of Paris. The Baron Haussmann lived in an apartment on one of the upper stories of a house in the Rue Boissy d'Anglas. It was not a Haussmann house. His ante-chamber, the hall of Parisian apartments, was hung with ugly brown curtains. There was neither style nor taste in any of the rooms which I entered. The place looked as though it had been furnished, certainly regardless of expense, from a bric-à-brac shop. In the drawing-room, where I waited some time before I was received, the furniture was rococo, but there was a magnificent suite of Louis XV. chairs amidst this harlequinade. A large and beautiful water-colour drawing of Empress Eugenie hung over one of the gilt consoles.

The Baron's study, however, where I presented myself, had a strong individual character. All the man, one might say, was in this room. The politician was shown by the numerous photographs of members of the Bonaparte family, signed by the givers, which hung in luxurious frames upon the walls. A large portrait of Napoleon III. met one's eyes as one entered. The furniture was in the *style administratif*; the chairs were stiff-backed and covered with green baize. There was a large square writing-table heaped up with papers, orderly disposed. I am not sure that a stand filled with green cardboard boxes was not to be seen in one corner of the room. The Baron's study was the office of a Cabinet Minister not too certain of his majority. The vague perfume of the Third Empire invaded the nostrils.

The Baron received me sitting in a low armchair, that *fauteuil* Voltaire to which all invalids in France



*Photo by Pierre Petit, Paris.*

**BARON HAUSSMANN.**



used to come in their old days. He was close to the fire, and his back was turned to the light. Seen thus, he might easily have been taken for a man of not more than fifty years of age. His face, which was clean-shaven, reminded me now of Goethe, now of Wordsworth; at times of Christian, the Vaudeville actor. The touch of *cabotinage* which tinged the Third Empire throughout was not to be wanting here. Though he coughed sadly all the time that I was with him, he seemed, in his eighty-first year, to be wonderfully well preserved. He used no spectacles, his voice was rich and full, and he appeared at least to have all his teeth. In some way that I cannot define he constantly reminded me of his imperial master and friend, as though their long association had left on the servant some of the personality of his superior.

His manner was most courteous and urbane. He apologized for not rising to welcome me. "I have been very ill," he said, "and cannot move about much."

He added that the publishing of his Memoirs was giving him great trouble and no little anxiety.

"I cannot tell you," he said, "the labour that this book has entailed upon me. When I first wrote it, it was simply with the intention of leaving to my children a story of my private and my public life, with the explanation of the hundred and one things that in the one or the other capacity of my existence may have puzzled them. As a public man, I have had to do many things which have been turned into reproaches against me, and which I never before had been able to explain. It was my intention in writing my Memoirs to furnish my children and family with this explanation. However, friends who had seen the manuscript found it so interesting a contribution to history that they begged



me to publish it for the general public, and after some hesitation I consented to do so.

“ But I never expected that getting a book printed meant such a lot of fuss and trouble. My publisher, Havard, saw the manuscript, said it was very good, and began printing at once. Then, when the first-proof was ready, he came to me and said that there were too many notes at the bottom of the pages, and that I must change this, because the public did not like to be constantly referred to the bottom of the pages. After that, he found that my chapters were much too long, and I had to arrange all the subdivisions of the book over again. ‘ Mon Dieu, monsieur, quel métier ! ’ It serves me right. I used to say that all literary folk were idlers. I know the truth now.

“ Another reason why I want to publish this book is to give the Emperor full credit for his share in the improvements in Paris with which my name is associated. He deserves far more credit for this than has ever been given to him. If you do me the honour of reading my first volume, you will find that I give a list of the names of the many colleagues who were associated with me in the gigantic work of transforming the shabby Paris which the Emperor found when he came to his throne into the beautiful city that she now is. At the head of the list I place the Emperor himself. Nobody so well as myself knows the important *rôle* he played in the municipal improvements. It was he, I may tell you, who first designed with his own hands the plan of the wonderful iron Central Markets, which were afterwards constructed by Baltard. I may say that there is hardly a single improvement that was carried out in Paris under the Empire which was not first suggested by Napoleon III. And you must remember, what people

often forget, that the Haussmannisation—it would be fairer to call it the Napoleonisation—of Paris consisted of far more than what is nowadays understood by that term. We did not only destroy and reconstitute whole quarters of Paris; we improved the water supply enormously, we built canals, we laid numerous squares and gardens. 'Mon Dieu, monsieur,' said the old architect, leaning back in his *fauteuil* Voltaire and closing his eyes, 'quel coup de pioche!'

In the course of our conversation I asked Baron Haussmann whether he had taken any great part in the politics of the Empire. He said, "I can hardly speak of a political career. I could speak with better aptness of my reminiscences of political affairs with which I was brought into contact. I have never assumed the *rôle* of an active politician, though I won't deny that I have very strong political opinions. It was my duty as Prefect of the Seine to be present at every one of the Cabinet Councils which were held under the Empire, and the whole political history of that period is clear in my mind. I may devote a fourth volume of my Memoirs to this part of my experiences, and I think that I should be able to give the public some very interesting information. I am well aware that I could have been infinitely more interesting if I had prepared myself all along for writing a book. But had I time to think of Memoirs in my active days?"

"It has only been in the last few years that I have made up my mind to record my life and my work. I have kept no notes and not one of the thousands of interesting documents that came into my hands. Only think, if I had collected all the papers that came my way, notes from the Emperor, notes from the Empress, from Bismarck, from the King of Prussia, letters from everybody of note

and of importance of the century,—I should have had the material for a score of volumes! But I never attached any importance to these documents. I was far too busy to collect them and too careless to preserve them.”

We talked of Madame Marianne, the Republic, and it was interesting to me to hear the way in which he spoke of *la gueuse*, as poor Paul de Cassagnac always called her.

“I am, and always have been, of the firm opinion,” Baron Haussmann told me, “that there is no other form of Government possible in France except Empire. I am an Imperialist by birth and by conviction, and I consider that the only possible form of democratic government under which France can prosper is Empire. France, of all peoples in the world, is one nation; her government should be one also. The executive should be stable, by means of heredity, with the sovereignty of the people firmly assured and protected. The title worn by the chief of the State in France should be such as to put his dignity on a par with that of the loftiest monarchs of the world.

“Those are my opinions, and, having given them, I need hardly say what I think of General Boulanger or of the Republic as a form of government. I will say, however, that such a Republic as was proposed by Boulanger could never have taken deep root in France, and that for the reason that a Republican form of Government, no matter what form it may assume, must and always will be antipathetic to the hearts of Frenchmen. France may put up with a Republic for some years, for many years; but just as surely as water finds its way eventually back to the sea, so also will France find her way back to monarchical government, repre-

sending in the authority of one man the sovereignty of the people.

“ I cannot say that I agreed with the policy followed by the Emperor. I was the strongest opponent of the war with Prussia that lived in France. It was all along my dream and my hope that France should ally herself with Prussia, so that by the consent and with the help of that State she might obtain the Rhenish provinces. My reason for desiring that France should obtain and hold the Rhenish provinces was, first, because the Rhine appears to be destined by Nature to form the frontier between France and Germany ; and, secondly, because it is from the Rhenish provinces that the French people originate ; for, as you know, the French are Franks, and the Franks came from the banks of the Rhine. Personally, as a descendant of the Lords of Andernach, near Cologne, seven generations back, I had special reasons for wishing that my policy might be put into execution.

“ Over and over again was my dream near to its realization. It was as good as offered us by the Prussians on several occasions. When Bismarck came to spend a few days with the Emperor and the Imperial Family at Biarritz in 1864, he told me that he was authorized to propose to Napoleon III. that Prussia, in return for France's using her influence against Austria, and thus assisting Prussia in the realization of her dream of founding the German Empire with Prussia at its head, would arrange for the retrocession to France of all the territory on the left banks of the Rhine. But there was influence in favour of Austria at work at Court, an influence so strong that Bismarck, although he was a guest, was received, as the saying is, ‘ like a dog in a game of skittles.’ I was quite ashamed of the treat-

ment which was accorded to him during his stay, and I feel sure that much of his bitterness against France was caused by his remembrance of that visit to Biarritz. That was before Sadowa.

“Of course, after the Austro-Prussian war, Prussia had no longer any need of our assistance against Austria, and the Emperor, in his anxiety to “court the cabbage and the goat alike,” or, as you say in England, “to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds,” had missed a splendid opportunity. Still, even then my project might have been carried into effect, because the German Empire was still not founded, and Prussia would still have been glad of an alliance with France, even after Sadowa, to enable her to carry out plans which even to-day she has not realized.

“It was at that time that I was frequently sounded both by the King of Prussia, Herr von Bismarck, and others, as to the chances of moving the Emperor to conclude such an alliance. I told them that it was useless to hope to move Napoleon. At that time I knew that nothing could be done in that direction. By that time I had recognized the omnipotence of the influence that drove the Emperor to sympathize with Austria, and I saw that no consideration would have any counter-effect. This influence was that of the Empress Eugenie, and it was she alone who all along turned the Emperor against Prussia and made him espouse the cause of Austria. She did this, firstly, because she is a Roman Catholic, and because her sympathies were accordingly rather with Catholic Austria than with Lutheran Prussia; and secondly, and chiefly, because she was under the influence of her very deep affection for Madame de Metternich, the wife of the Austrian Ambassador to France.



“It was thanks to this love of Austria that she urged on the Emperor to take the first opportunity of breaking the power of Prussia, and hence the war of 1870. That war, consequently, was caused directly by little Madame de Metternich, through the Empress Eugenie and her paramount influence on Napoleon III. I, as I have said, opposed it all along; but my position in the Cabinet Council was rather one of mere supernumerary or figurant than of councillor, and I had no opinion to give. My opinions have not changed since those days, and I still believe that the wisest policy that France could follow would be to join a triple alliance with Germany and Russia. Germany needs ports on the south. The alliance would ensure her the possession of Trieste. Thus France would have issue on the Mediterranean, Germany on the Adriatic, and Russia on the Caspian Seas, and the triple alliance would command the south as well as the north, and be absolute masters of the world. I do not say that this policy is advisable, or even possible, to-day; for since the last war the idea of an alliance with Prussia must be distasteful to most Frenchmen. But I still think that the future power of France and the peace of Europe lie in that direction.”

On another occasion Baron Haussmann, in telling me of his childhood and youth, said: “I was born in Paris in 1809. My people destined me for the Civil Service; but no child under the First Empire could dream of becoming anything else but a soldier, and it was from my very childhood my desire to follow the profession of my father, who was an officer. It was about that time that the disasters of France began, the battle of Leipsic and the invasion of France, which was the consequence of Leipsic. I was at Chaville all that time, and, child as I was, I suffered as much as any

Frenchman at the disasters of my country. I can remember the feeling of bitter shame that came over me when one day, after a skirmish near Versailles, I saw my grandmother and her women forced to bind up the wounds of some Bavarian soldiers. When people talk to me of *la revanche*, I say that I must see a double *revanche* to be satisfied: that of 1815 as well as that of 1870.

“At eleven years of age I had become quite a sturdy youngster, and could be moved to Paris, where I entered the Lycée Henri-Quatre, or, as it is now called, the Lycée Condorcet. From the Lycée Henri-Quatre I went, at the age of sixteen, to the Collège Bourbon. One of my chums was the Duke of Orleans. Another chum was Alfred de Musset, whom we used to call Mademoiselle de Musset, because he was so slender, delicate, and fair. None of us ever had any idea that he would develop into the charming poet that he afterwards became.

“As soon as I had passed my *baccalauréat* I entered as student at the Law School, and was able to pass my examination as Doctor of Law in 1831. It was during the Revolution of July that I won my first decoration. I cannot say that I deserved it, for it was only by chance that I happened to be present at the *mêlée* in which I received the wound for which it was given to me. My father was at that time one of the directors and editors of *Le Temps*, which contributed not a little to the overthrow of the Legitimist cause. My father was one of the men who signed the famous protestation of the journalists. I was with him during the whole of the troubled days of July, when our presses were seized and we had to print the paper in the cellar with presses that had been hidden there for the emergency.

Monsieur Thiers did not at that time behave with any particular courage; he deserted his friends of *La Nationale* to seek safety in the country. On May 22, 1831, I was attached as General Secretary to the Prefecture of the Department of Vienne. Twenty-two years later I came to Paris to occupy the post of Prefect of the Seine which I continued to hold until the fall of the Empire."

On this occasion, the last on which I saw him, Baron Haussmann had promised to give me a *résumé* of his political experiences, together with some personal souvenirs of the Emperor, whom he more than once described to me as *un grand méconnu*. But from the first moment I saw that he was not in a fit state to talk. He coughed several times badly whilst he was telling me about his boyhood, and indeed I was rising to go when a most violent fit of coughing seized him. For an instant I was in terror that he might expire before my eyes, but the servant for whom he had rung before the paroxysm came on, hurried in, administered remedies, and brought him round. He recovered, but he was then so exhausted that I prayed him to defer till another day the interesting story that he had promised me. I remember the last words he said to me as though they had just been spoken.

"Another day, *mon ami*? Shall we ever meet again? I may be carried off at any moment by one of those *crises* which you have just witnessed. May it be so. I look forward with confidence to death, and my only hope is that death may find me standing (*debout*) as it found all the strong men of my generation. I shall leave this life," said Baron Haussmann, "if not with an erect head as formerly, at least with a firm heart; and as to the things of the world beyond the grave, full of hope in the merciful justice of the Most High God."

The eyes of Baron Haussmann were dim as I left him. I am not ashamed to say that mine were also. Very shortly after this visit had taken place his door was shut to everybody. I never saw him again in life.

I do not think that his Memoirs attracted much attention ; it is quite certain that nobody reads them now ; the Empire and all that it brought forth seem so far away. People have forgotten. Even the war is not remembered. Talk about *la revanche*, which was quite common even at the time when I first met Baron Haussmann, is now restricted to a few of the more ardent members of the *Ligue des Patriotes*. Perhaps now that Paul Déroulède is returning to France we may hear more about it. It is what the French call Déroulède's *craquette*. For the rest, I think that everybody who loves the picturesqueness of politics will be pleased that Déroulède's term of exile has been reduced. He introduces a dramatic element into all popular gatherings for which one cannot be sufficiently grateful. His is a striking figure. If he has of Don Quixote the appearance, he also shows his chivalry. I have always had a very considerable respect for Paul Déroulède. Like Henri Rochefort, he is the least self-seeking and most honest of politicians. He suffers under this terrible disadvantage in political life : he has a heart—under his rugged exterior he has a heart. He is a poet. His *Chants du Soldat* have a peculiar charm, and are full of power. He has sacrificed more than one fortune to the cause which he believes to be just. There have been times when he has been on the verge of destitution for this reason. But his pen would always suffice to earn for him an honourable living.

He comes of literary stock. He is a nephew of Emile Augier, and a cousin to the Bellocs, Hilaire and

Marie (Belloc-Lowndes), who have won in their youth as distinguished a place in English letters as their mother has enjoyed for years past. The only true reproach that can be made against Déroulède is that he is not practical. But then who expects a poet to be practical? He is not destined to succeed as politician, for he is too honest and too single-hearted; and besides, the Masonic *loges* which now rule France will have none of a man who has sympathy with the Church. But he will continue to charm us with his wild and impossible schemes for winning back to France the military greatness which is given once and once only to nations.

It was very interesting to hear Baron Haussmann talk of the *vieux Paris*, which he demolished, and which many still regret. I have often deplored that I kept no record of the things he told me. He seemed to share my admiration for picturesque and mediæval streets, but he was convinced that air and hygiene were of more importance than a beauty which only appeals to the few. I remember his particular satisfaction at having demolished the fetid quarter through which the Avenue de l'Opéra now runs, and especially his pride in having transformed the quarter of the Place du Châtelet. "C'était une cloaque," he said. It was through this "cloaque" that ran that street, the Rue de la Vieille-Lanterne, where hard by the tavern of "Veau qui Tette," Gerard de Nerval, poet and lover of the Queen of Sheba, was found hanging.

One had always understood that the poet committed suicide, weary of life and of debauch; but Haussmann maintained that he had been assured by the police that Gerard de Nerval was murdered. There were two theories to account for the motive which prompted this crime: one was that Gerard de Nerval had been



gambling successfully in the tavern, and that he was first robbed and then killed; the other, favoured by the police at the time, was that he had been taken for a police spy by the ruffians who frequented the "Veau qui Tette" and the other kens of Old Lanthorne Street. To police spies even to-day in Paris mercy is never shown. The poet had the habit of taking notes when anything occurred to him, an idea, a turn of phrase, and this would seem suspicious conduct to the illiterate brutes who sat about him. He was taken for a *mouchard* or a *mouton*, and was disposed of by the law of lynch.

He was not dead when he was found dangling from the railing where he was hanged; but those who found him feared to touch him before the police had been fetched, and in the meanwhile the gentle poet, ceasing to struggle, had breathed his last. It was then remembered that he had once asked himself, "Dost thou absolutely wish to die a horizontal death?" It appears that the exact spot where his body hung was where is now the opening of the prompter's box on the stage of Madame Sarah Bernhardt's theatre. "He possibly anticipated Sarah's five thousandth performance of *La Dame aux Camélias* when he selected that spot to hang himself," said a cynic to whom I once mentioned the fact.

In the days before I knew Baron Haussmann and had grown to like and respect him, it was my habit, as I wandered about Paris and found some architectural relic of the past, a tortuous street, a mediæval house, a gabled roof, even a name painted at a street corner which dated from a less materialistic age, it was my habit, I say, to rub my hands and, addressing an imaginary Haussmann, whom I represented to myself as a paunchy man with whiskers, to exclaim, "Encore un morceau que tu n'auras pas." In much the same way

as to this very hour on the Breton coast the fisherfolk after a hearty meal, remembering what they have heard their fathers tell of British raids upon their coasts, will push away their plates and with a sigh of satisfaction cry out, "Encore un que ces cochons d'Anglais n'auront pas." There are still many places in Paris where one can plunge into the middle of the ages. To the right and the left of the Boulevard St. Michel there are still many quaint streets. But it was in one of these streets that only the other day I had a sad disappointment. This is the street known as Gît-le-Cœur. Written so, the name implies some story of a bleeding heart, some far-off romance. I often used to wonder what that story might be. Well, only a day or two ago, returning there again, I happened to look up more attentively than had been my custom at the corner where the name is enamelled in white letters on a blue ground, "Rue Gît-le-Cœur." Well, below the enamelled iron plate, I then for the first time descried hewn in the stone, and painted over with yellow paint which had masked the lettering, the old name of the street. This was Rue Gilles Cœur. It was only Giles Cœur Street after all, and all the romance was fled.

I presume that when the street plates were affixed throughout Paris, some member of the Commission which had to do with this quarter of Paris thought that Gît-le-Cœur would sound and look prettier than Gilles Cœur, and so effaced the memorial to a man who may have been a worthy burgher under Henri Quatre. Such disappointments are not unfrequent to those who go a-hunting for romance. I consoled myself by walking on to the Rue Guénégaud at the corner of the Quai de Conti and looking at the wine-shop which stands there, and which, like all mediæval wine-shops, is as in a cage

of iron bars. In the former times all taverns had thus, by police decree, to be provided with iron bars both as to the doors and to the windows. This was not to protect the tavern keeper from the street, but to protect the street from the people in the tavern. These might cut their throats within the bars as much as they pleased, and throw their pots and brandish chairs. The burghers passing in the street were secure because the iron bars (which had to be painted red for danger signal) kept close and tight the wild beasts—the Francis Archers and other drunken serving-men with knives for killing Marlowes in tavern brawls.

Indeed, at every step almost along the stretch of quays from the Place St. Michel to the Pont Royal there is something to recall the past with interest. On the very last occasion when I was with Alphonse Daudet, and I had told him that I was staying at the Hôtel Voltaire on the Quai Voltaire, he said to me: "You have chosen the best place in Paris where to live. You are surrounded with noble memories. When I was a young man I spent some of the most inspiring days of my life in that quarter." He added, when I had told him that I was moving to the Rue Condorcet: "Oh, why leave the land of poetry and romance to plunge yourself into the midst of *la pourriture montmartraise* (the putridity of Montmartre)?"

It was at this Hôtel Voltaire that I first saw Oscar Wilde as a young man in the full bloom of his genius. Here it was that one night I once aroused Henry Harland from his sleep to ask him to serve me as a second in a duel which had been forced upon me. Here I once dined with Rollinat, the poet and musician, for whom so dreadful a fate was reserved.

Further on is the house where is the bookshop, now

owned by Monsieur Honoré Champion, which used to be kept by the father of Anatole Thibaud (better known as Anatole France), where in 1844 the future master of French prose was born, and where with the very air which he breathed the child sucked in his love of letters. Champion, by the way, was a friend of Zola's. They were booksellers' clerks together, and it is Honoré Champion's boast and pride that it was he who prompted Zola to write *Le Rêve*. "We had been buying an antique manuscript together," he tells one, "at the Hôtel Drouot, and, as we were walking away, I reproached him that his Rougon-Macquart family was but a collection of the very worst people that one could conceive. I said, 'Emile, you will give the world a very poor opinion of us if you impose your Rougon-Macquarts as typical of a modern French family. We none of us can date our pedigrees further back than the Revolution. Are the Rougon-Macquarts to be considered representative of the new France which blossomed on the ruins of the old?' I said that it was not natural that every member of a family should be so entirely degenerate, and I reminded him that even on the most decayed of forest trees one finds fresh and healthy shoots. I think that he took my words to heart, and that *Le Rêve* was the consequence of the lecture which I gave him."

Still further on is the house where once stood the Café d'Orsay, which used at one time to be the house of call of young men of letters who took their profession *au sérieux*. Overhead lived the daughter of Monsieur Buloz, the separated wife of Maxime Pailleron, author of *Le Monde où l'on s'Ennuie*, and in an adjoining apartment, separated from his wife's home only by a door which was ever kept locked, lived Maxime Pailleron himself.

One was thus, when in the Café d'Orsay, below stairs of the highest life in the world of letters, and each glance at the decorated ceiling of the *café* was the *ad astra* glance of healthful ambition. Here I used to meet Bourget, who had not then "arrived." John Sergeant, the painter, sometimes came there, and others whom one has not heard of since.

From the terrace of this *café* one could see the Rue de Bac, down which the stream used to flow, on whose banks Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné, lived in lettered ease. Tradition of the noblest kind peered at one round every corner. Not very far away was the French Academy. Daudet was living a stone's throw from the place, and hard by was one of the houses where Gerard de Nerval lived his most productive years. It is only quite recently that modern Haussmanns, Haussmanns only in their ruthless iconoclasm, have begun to devastate this quarter also.



## CHAPTER VIII

Ferdinand de Lesseps—On the Science of Antechambering—A Meeting of the Council—His Entire Confidence—Countess Kessler's Dinner Party—An Introduction to Magnard—De Lesseps to the Rescue—De Lesseps and the Poor Woman—The Report of his Death—A Stock-jobbing Manœuvre—A Drive to the Institute.

I AM not at all certain that those who live their lives in cities have not often reason to feel thankful to the men who demolish and rebuild. They remove what are the landmarks in one's life ; they do away with places which are associated in one's mind with men and women and things that have been in the past ; they blunt the edge of memory. Now it is, I am afraid, the experience of most who have passed many years in one town that to remember is to mourn.

There is, for an instance, a certain spot in the Avenue des Champs Elysées which formerly used to bring back to my mind the remembrance that it was there that for the first time I saw Ferdinand de Lesseps. The fine old man came dashing past on horseback, followed in gay cavalcade by his beautiful children on their ponies. That was twenty years ago, and for a long period the remembrance was indeed a pleasant one ; such a splendid cavalier he looked, and his children so bonny, so full of joy and life. Then came the days when the picture so evoked, so bright and gladsome, immediately transformed itself into the mournful vision

of the old man as I saw him last, surrounded by his children, whom grief had touched. But now, since the great alterations that were carried out in this part of the avenue in 1900, I can pass that way with no fear lest recollection should come to trouble me. It is altogether a different place; the scene around me does not jog my memory at all.

It was three years after I first saw him riding so gallantly at the head of his children—his *smala* he used to call them, in remembrance of his Egyptian days—that I came to know him; and so it was given to me to enjoy for three years the friendship and kindness of a good and noble man. My admiration for him was unbounded. It is a trait of English character to offer a homage almost akin to worship to men in whom great energy has survived their tale of years; and here was a man of eighty-three, who, blithe and light-hearted, had engaged in one of the most colossal fights for which enterprise has ever thrown down its gauntlet. He was so young, he was so merry, so debonair, so full of life and strength, that he appeared to me to be one of the most wonderful old men that the world had ever produced.

Not long after the day on which I first shook hands with him he did me an act of kindness which bound me to him with chains of steel. I have often taken a secret and malicious joy, whenever the name of Ferdinand de Lesseps has been mentioned in my presence, and people have made haste to say evil things about him, to state that I owed him a great debt, that he had placed me under an obligation which I had never been able to repay. I then have watched in the eyes of those to whom I have said this the glint of query, and I have always been able to read the question, "How much was it?" I give them no information; but I hug myself to think

of what it really was, that I was one of de Lesseps' most ardent supporters, the champion of his name and honour, at a time when to go with the world one had to cast stones upon his ruined greatness, and that amongst my treasured autographs is a letter from his wife in which she told me that I had shown myself "le courtisan de la dernière heure."

The proprietor of the New York paper for which in 1887 I was acting as Paris correspondent was a personal friend of Monsieur de Lesseps, and for this reason rather than because the American public had any financial interests in the Panama Canal Company, he had directed me to call on Lesseps and keep the paper informed of the progress of his enterprise. It was for the same reason, no doubt, also, that to a letter which I wrote in December of that year, asking to be allowed to call on him, a most courteous invitation to attend at the offices of the Suez Canal Company was sent in reply by Monsieur le Président.

For at the offices of the Suez Canal it was as Monsieur le Président and as Monsieur le Président alone that one had to ask for the man who afterwards came to be spoken of as *le nommé Lesseps*. I can remember the indignation with which one of the liveried *huissiers* at the palace in the Rue de Charras corrected me when I asked him if he would take my card in to Monsieur de Lesseps. "Monsieur le Président," he cried, shaking his head in indignation at my disrespectfulness till the silver-gilt chain round his neck rattled again. Then he glanced contemptuously at my card, and, having looked me up and down to enforce the lesson which he had just given me, waved his hand round the huge hall and asked, "What likelihood is there that Monsieur le Président will be able to receive you?" There were

over a hundred people waiting an audience, most of them people of very much greater importance than a mere reporter. I recognised several deputies, a senator or two, and some of the best-known engineers and financiers in Paris. "For the rest," he said, "Monsieur le Président is not at home." Then he turned his back on me and walked away.

There was a deputy there whom I knew, and I learned from him that it was true that Lesseps had not yet arrived, "which," said the legislator, "is preventing me from taking my *apéritif* and will spoil my *déjeuner*." One has not the time in the rush of modern life to play the Dr. Johnson in any great man's antechamber, and I have ever found it a good thing on occasions like this so to place myself that the great man may be aware of my presence. I have always felt sure that if Lord Chesterfield could have known that the doctor was waiting outside, the occasion for a famous letter would never have arisen, and I cannot look at a certain engraving without thinking that if instead of moping out of sight round a corner, Doctor Johnson had planted himself squarely in the passage of which my lord, finicking in his chair, had an uninterrupted view, Colley Cibber's petty triumph would have been but a short one.

On this occasion I decided that if I was to see Lesseps that day, I must let him know, what the *huissiers* would not, that I was in attendance; and accordingly I went downstairs and waited in the courtyard, where Monsieur le Président would see me as soon as he alighted from his carriage. Presently a dashing brougham drove up with a smart coachman on the box and a high-stepping bay between the shafts. Monsieur de Lesseps was inside, and seated by him was a valet in plain clothes. The carriage was filled with toys,

Christmas presents and *étrennes* for the little ones at home. I was delighted to see the brisk way in which the count opened the door and sprang to the ground, and the firm tread with which he walked away. I raised my hat as he passed me, and as he saluted me in return I mentioned my name. Then I hurried back to the antechamber, and bade the *huissier* to whom I had first spoken take in my card at once. There was a murmur of indignation from the crowd which was waiting, now swollen to over two hundred people. The *huissier* said that it was quite useless, that Monsieur le Président was *en conférence*, that matters of the highest importance were being discussed in the *chambre de conseil*, and that in any case my turn would come after all these other gentlemen had been received.

There is one excellent thing about the new journalism, and that is that it dispels all false modesty. When one has either to do or to "get left," and when to get left usually means to die of hunger, one develops remarkable energy in the assertion of one's personality. I roughly ordered the man to take in my card, and asked him if he thought that the "American millions" could be kept waiting, no matter the importance of the things under discussion in the council chamber. He may have fancied that the "American millions" meant dollars, my mental reservation being the alleged number of readers of the paper which I represented, for he appeared awed, and departed with my card. He returned in a very short time with considerable alacrity and actually bowed to me. However, for the benefit of the gallery, he qualified his announcement that Monsieur le Président was expecting me, and that I could be received at once, with the remark "in spite of the urgent affairs under discussion."



I always am diffident and feel awkward in the presence of men of business, and as I followed the liveried official to the council room, I felt like little Oliver when he was about to be laid before the Board. A moment later the *huissier* had ushered me into a magnificent room, which at first sight appeared to me to be absolutely empty. A long table covered with green baize, and set out with that array of stationery which is a familiar feature of board-rooms, ran down the centre of the apartment, flanked on each side with rows of comfortable *fauteuils*. There were maps on the walls, and books and pamphlets in masses on various pieces of furniture; but where was the Board and where was Monsieur le Président?

Monsieur de Lesseps was sitting by the fireplace, which was in a line with the door by which I had entered. He was simply warming his hands by the fire. He got up when he saw me and gave me a very pretty bow, and then he shook hands. He was good enough to say that he was very pleased to see me. I said that I had understood that he was *en conférence*, and he answered, "So I am. With the fire, the tongs, the poker, and the shovel." "And yonder," I said, pointing to the coal-scuttle, "is no doubt the gentleman who is to join the Board after allotment?" "And why so?" asked de Lesseps. "His mouth is so very wide open," I said. He laughed at this, and then bade me take a chair and sit down and warm myself. "C'est qu'il ne fait pas chaud du tout," he said. We chatted on various topics for some time before I could bring him to speak about the Panama Canal. What he then did say on the subject I desire to repeat, for I think that it shows his absolute sincerity and confidence in that ill-fated enterprise, which was to bring such disaster on

thousands of Frenchmen. His words belong to history.

“I am,” he said, “as full of confidence as ever. If you are a shareholder in the Panama Company, let me advise you to put your shares away in a safe, and to bolt and bar them in. We shall open our canal at the end of 1889, after the Exhibition here, or at the very latest at the beginning of 1890. That is certain. I say it and I mean it. What was the reason of the recent fall in the shares? The manœuvres of certain rogues, speculators of course, who trade on the pusillanimity of the shareholders. Just before that fall thousands of copies of a broadsheet, headed “The Cataclysm of the Canal of Panama,” were hawked about Paris and thrust upon the public. An abominable lie, of course, but one which, though it left us as indifferent as I am now to the barking of that dog in the street, created a panic among some of the shareholders. As soon as the speculators had got what they wanted the rumours were contradicted, the broadsheets disappeared, and the shares went back.

“No, there are no ways of putting a stop to these manœuvres, even if I cared to trouble to do so. A friend of mine who had bought one of these papers hauled the hawker off to the police-station, and charged him with obtaining money by false pretences. He got two months. But I find it best to treat these fellows and the rogues who set them at work with the contempt they deserve. I confess, though, that the other day I laid my cane about the back of one of these hawkers. He was selling a sheet with something of a very offensive personal nature. I don't think that he will offer me one of his broadsheets again in a hurry. How can I care for these attacks, when I have never cared

for difficulties which, compared to these molehills, have been as mountains?

“Why, did I not go right through with the Suez Canal, and need I recapitulate all the opposition that I met with there? Do you know the story of what occurred on the very evening before the inauguration? It was at a grand ball at the Consulate. About midnight in the middle of a waltz, a Job’s messenger of a fellow, with a face as long as—that, comes to me from the works, and whispers to me that a dredging-boat laden with sand had sunk and made the canal impassable. ‘Blow it up with dynamite, and at once,’ I said, and went on with my dance.

“The following day was my wedding-day also, I must tell you. Part of the money which my father-in-law gave me in dowry with my wife was a sum of 100,000 francs. This money on my wedding-day, as soon as I had received it, I sent to Paris and bought Suez Canal shares for the amount. Well, those 100,000 francs realised 1,500,000 francs for my wife, and it is with 800,000 francs of that amount that I bought for her the house she now possesses in the Avenue Montaigne. So you see that I have some right to have confidence, and, as I tell you, I have full confidence in this Panama scheme. Why, at one time the Suez Canal shares were down to 150 francs, and that is lower than the Panama shares have ever gone.

“As to the Nicaraguan expedition,” he said, “I fear no competition at all. It is impossible to make a practical canal fit for ocean traffic with fresh water. As to all the other canals which are being talked of, I shall only be too glad to see the Americans make them in as great a number and in as many directions as possible. All that will be good for trade, and the better trade is,

the more tolls there will be paid at the gates of our canal. It will all bring grist to our mill. I am going to run over to Panama towards the beginning of March, and I may tell you that I am taking Eiffel with me. We have just drawn up a contract with Eiffel & Son to construct for us a huge lock with iron gates at the foot of the Culebra, to be fed with the waters of the Chagrés river there, and it is thanks to the construction of this lock that we shall be able to open the canal by the date I have mentioned."

More than once in the course of his remarks about the Panama Company he advised me, if I were a shareholder, to keep fast to my shares. I do not want any better proof of his absolute good faith, of his entire confidence in the soundness of his undertaking than that. I do not suppose that Christophle himself or any other of the bitterest enemies of "the great Frenchman" would go so far as to accuse de Lesseps of having wilfully deceived by unnecessary lies a young man who was not well off.

I was so pleased with the kindness of my reception and so interested in his conversation that it was not until much later that, thinking over what had passed between us, I recognised that possibly, if indeed I had been a shareholder, I might have felt some uneasiness, in spite of the entire confidence he showed. He spoke so lightly of the difficulties; he seemed to think that the matter was not one that wanted discussing at all. It appeared to me that he took far more pleasure in telling me little stories and making little jokes than in talking of business. It occurred to me more than once during the course of our conversation that the crowd of suitors in the antechamber believed us to be in weighty conference. He spent quite a quarter of an hour in telling

me about a recent visit of his to Berlin, and the hospitality which had been shown to him at the Prussian Court. The Emperor had been very kind to him, and he had been delighted with the Empress. He also talked about Sir Edward Malet, a mutual acquaintance, and how he had first met him in Egypt.

And *à propos* of Egypt, he suddenly exclaimed, "You English will have to clear out of Egypt. You will never be able to remain there. No race can obtain absolute possession of a country which it has invaded unless it is able to intermarry with the subjected natives and absorb the inferior race. Egypt must be for the Egyptians, and for the simple reason that no intermarriage between Egyptians and foreigners is possible. Such marriages are always childless."

I left him that day feeling full of enthusiasm both for the man and the enterprise. After I had left the room, he opened the door behind me and came a little way out, beckoning me back. "You must come to the Avenue Montaigne and see us," he said. "You must come and have *déjeuner* with us one day. I want you to see my children, all my children." I shall not forget the face of the *huissier* with the gilt chain round his neck when he heard Monsieur le Président saying this to me. It was suffused with awe and respect, and he sprang forward to pilot me through the vulgar mob that crowded the entrance-hall. His activity with his hands and elbows on my behalf was surprising, and his "Way there! Way there! Gentleman from the Chambre du Conseil," was emphatic as to my importance. I suppose that he thought that he could not be energetic enough in the service of the representative of the "American millions." It may never have occurred to him that Monsieur de Lesseps was a friendly old gentleman who, finding a



sympathetic listener, had enjoyed an hour's chat about places and people familiar to us both.

A week or two later I dined one night at the house of Count Kessler on the Cours-la-Reine. The Count was married to an Irish lady of remarkable beauty and the greatest charm. Their house—they entertained very largely—was one of the very best houses in Paris. One met everybody there. The countess's little dinners had a European reputation. Kessler was the kindest of men and an admirable host. His death a few years ago left a great gap in Parisian society.

That night there were many very distinguished people among the guests who were assembled in the drawing-room. There was a superfluous king, there was an American railway magnate, there was the needy Princess Pierre Bonaparte and her millionaire son Roland, there was a French Minister of State, there was the editor of the *Figaro*, and a number of other people of note and distinction. Standing with his back to the fire was the *grand Français*, Ferdinand de Lesseps. He was talking to the superfluous king and the railway magnate, and a bevy of adoring women were standing around the group. I was very pleased to see a man there whom I respected, but it never occurred to me that he would remember me, nor did I expect him to take any notice of a person whose intrinsic insignificance was heightened by the splendour of the company in which he found himself.

Shortly before dinner was announced, Kessler came up to me and said, "Oh, I want to introduce you to Magnard, the editor of the *Figaro*. He's a man you ought to know in Paris, and he might be useful to you. Come along." Magnard was standing in the very centre of the drawing-room, talking to G—— B——, who at that time was one of the editors of *Le Petit Journal*, and added

considerably to his income by teaching foreign *prime donne* how to pronounce French. I had heard all about him from Melba. Magnard's back was towards us. The Count touched him on the shoulder and said, "Oh, Magnard, here is a young *confrère* of yours whom I want you to know. It is Mr. Robert Sherard, of the *New York* ——" Having said this, Kessler, who was one of the most vigilant of hosts, darted off to attend to the comfort of some one else. Magnard said nothing, but bowed a mock bow, bending his fat little body in two, so that his hair nearly touched the points of his shoes. Then he swung round on his heel, presented his fat back to my gaze, and quietly went on talking to G—— B——. I never felt more confused in my life.

This scene had been enacted in the very middle of the drawing-room, and had been noticed by everybody present. I confess that for a moment I had it in mind to step back and take a drop at goal with the plump rotundity that the uncivil editor so temptingly displayed. Magnard's pantomime, of course, was intended to convey to me and to the lookers-on that the editor of *Le Figaro* was a man of far too great importance to waste even a word on an obscure young foreigner. I heard more than one titter. I was at an entire loss how to withdraw in a dignified manner.

At that moment I saw a movement round the fireplace, and I heard de Lesseps say, "Oh, pardon me, but I see a young friend of mine there. I must go and speak to him." And breaking off his conversation with the two kings, and passing through the bevy of adoring women, the kind old gentleman came across the room to me with outstretched hands, saying such flattering things as, "Quelle bonne surprise! Quel plaisir de vous revoir!" He came right up to where I stood in utter confusion,

and gripped my hand, and then, taking me by the arm, drew me on one side—away from my pillory—and kept me talking with him until dinner was announced. It was done from sheer kindness. He had seen the public affront put upon me; he had disapproved of the rudeness shown to a young man of no importance; he had given Magnard and those who had applauded his buffoonery a well-deserved lesson. The effect produced was immediate, for in those days Ferdinand de Lesseps was still one of the most important persons in the world. I at once became a personage. I was courted at table. In the smoking-room afterwards the magnate gave me a “pointer” about Milwaukee, and the superfluous king handed me his gold cigarette-case. But, better than this, Magnard himself came up to me and made himself as pleasant as he could. He hoped that I would call on him at the *Figaro*. He would be glad to receive me at any time. This was the kindness which Lesseps did to me; this was the act which I never forgot.

I frequently saw him afterwards. Once I walked home with him from the Rue de Charras to the Avenue Montaigne. From the number of times we were saluted in the street, I could gauge the extent of his popularity. My arm quite ached from raising my hand to my hat. And during the course of this walk I had another proof how entirely his confidence was still unshaken. As we were waiting at the Rond-Point in the Champs-Élysées to cross over to the Avenue Montaigne, a woman of the people, recognising Lesseps rushed up to him, and, catching hold of his hand, almost knelt down before him, imploring him to tell her if “Panama was good.” Was she to keep her shares? He was very kind to her, and he said: “*Parbleu!* Panama is good. If it weren’t good, *ma pauvre dame*, do you

think that I, a *père de famille*, would have put all the dowries of my children into Panama shares?" The woman went away radiant. I often thought of her after the catastrophe.

On the last day of the subscription of the 1888 loan, one afternoon a newspaper agency telephoned to me to tell me that Lesseps had died suddenly. This statement was made with such authority that I immediately rang up the Avenue de Montaigne. A minute later I had heard Madame de Lesseps' laughing denial. She told me that I had better go to the Suez office and convince myself of the falsehood of the report. I found the old gentleman in the company of General Saussier, the mammoth governor of Paris, and another man who since those days has loomed large in Panama's affairs. It was Bunaud Varrila. Lesseps introduced him to me and said, "This is our chief engineer. He has just returned from Panama, and he can tell you that everything is going on very well out there. There have been no cases at all of sickness during the last two months." I repeat these words because they show how de Lesseps was being misinformed. Things were not going on very well in Panama on the canal works in June, 1888, and there never was a period of two months without a single case of sickness amongst the workers.

But in June, 1888, there were still millions in the Panama cashbox, and it was to the interest of some people to keep the President in happy ignorance of the true state of things. He told me that the subscription was a success, that they had already got what they wanted, that is to say, enough to complete the work. "The subscription would have been still more successful but for this last manœuvre, the report of my death. Dead, I! Is it not amusing? I don't look very much

like a dead man, do I? I am in better health and in better spirits than I have been for a long time. This morning I took a three hours' ride with my children in the Bois." He then asked me which way I was going, and when I told him that I had no particular engagement he asked me to come with him in his carriage. He was driving over to the Institute, to attend a sitting of the French Academy.

On our way there he told me that the meeting had been called to hear the refusal of the Government to the petition sent in by the Academy that the Duc d'Aumale might be allowed to return to France from exile. He then told me many interesting anecdotes about the duke, and referred to the rumour of his intention to marry the Comtesse de Clinchamps. De Lesseps laughed at this report. "I have known Madame de Clinchamps a long time," he said. "She is an old lady, older than the Duc d'Aumale. She first entered his service as the head of the laundry at Chantilly. She was a very intelligent woman, and the duke liked her so well that he promoted her to the general management of his palace. Since then she has acted as *gouvernante*. I fancy, though, that if the duke had intended to remarry he would have chosen a younger woman."

He also talked about the trouble that there was then at Chenonceaux, where Daniel Wilson's sister, Madame Pélouze, had just had her goods seized by the bailiffs. "There is to be a sale there," he said, "in the château where Diane de Poitiers lived and loved. What would Catherine de Medicis have said to find bailiffs in her bedroom? We are wondering why neither Grévy nor Wilson, who both have sacks of money (*qui ont le sac tous les deux*), don't help her out of her difficulty, for the credit of the name. Surely there have been enough



Wilson scandals. The debts amount to over a million and a half francs, and include such miserable amounts as one hundred francs owing to the village baker."

He was very merry and entertaining, and the drive was a pleasant one. This was, however, to be one of the last occasions when I was in his company which I can remember with gladness.

## CHAPTER IX

Ferdinand de Lesseps—Three Years Later—How he heard of the Prosecution—His Resignation—His Wife's Courage—Widespread Sympathy—An Emperor's Letter—The Family's Losses—His Faith in Panama—His Dislike of Speculation.

THREE years later, in June once more, and, I think, upon the very anniversary of the day on which I had had that pleasant drive with Ferdinand de Lesseps, the Academician, from the mansion of the Suez Canal Company to the Palace of the Institute of France, I was once more in his company. I had learned that the Government had at last decided to prosecute those whom it pretended to hold responsible for the catastrophe of the Panama Canal Company, and that Count Ferdinand de Lesseps and his son Charles were to be sacrificed to the rancours of those who had been robbed of their money. The robbers were certain people whose names are notorious, besides a number of deputies and senators, and hundreds of journalists, engineers, financiers, blackmailers, inventors, politicians; and every one of these, with the exceptions of two penitent thieves, who were fools enough to confess, were allowed to escape punishment of every kind. As Madame de Lesseps wrote to me in 1894, "Nos ennuis ne sont pas finis, et les innocents paient pour les coupables." The innocent paid for the guilty right through in this miserable affair.

It was through an ill-conditioned newspaper reporter, so Madame de Lesseps told me, that the Count and his family had heard that the prosecution had been decided upon. "It was last Thursday evening," she told me. "We had been out driving together, and as we entered we saw a man arguing with our concierge."

"A difficult thing to get the best of your concierge, madame," I said. "He has the reputation amongst the newspaper men in Paris of being most devoted to your service. He is as discreet as the tomb; he is sturdy and vigorous, and can repel any attempts to reach the staircase with violence and arms."

"Yes," she said, "he is a splendid servant. But all our people are devoted to Monsieur de Lesseps. You should see his valet. Well," she continued, "as soon as this man, who was arguing with the concierge, saw us come in, he made a spring forward, and managed to escape the porter, and came running up the stairs behind us, with the porter in chase behind him. The Count saw this, and, with his usual kindness, said, 'Let him come up. Come up, sir,'—and he came up and followed us into this room. Monsieur de Lesseps sat down there, and the reporter—oh, he was such an ugly man!—sat there. Then, without any preface or preamble, he came out with: 'Can you tell me for what day you have been summoned before the Court of Appeal, because, as a Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour, it is, of course, before the Court of Appeal that you will have to appear to answer the charges made against you with reference to Panama?' I jumped up. I could have boxed his ears. 'How dare you, sir?' I cried. 'How dare you say such things to my husband? Mightn't it have killed him to have this news broken to him like that?'"

I found de Lesseps much as I had always known him. His eyes were still bright, and he carried himself erect; but he looked pale and very weary. A rug was drawn over his knees as he sat on the sofa, though it was summer-time. We were in the little drawing-room on the *entresol* of the house in the Avenue de Montaigne, the family-room, as it might be called, in distinction to the apartments of State. Here de Lesseps used to play with his children. The room that day was filled with a delightful bevy of little folks, beautiful children, with great Spanish eyes and curly heads. Poor Madame de Lesseps was in black, and seemed very nervous and exhausted. "I keep everybody away from him," she said. "I do not let any letters reach him. He is a very old man, and he is not the same as he was before the crash came."

Young Ismail de Lesseps, a gentlemanly young man, was in the room. He told me that he had just returned from undergoing his examination for admission to St. Cyr Military College. He was so nice and gentle to his father and so courteous to his mother that I liked him from the very first. His mother was saying that it had been very hard on the lad to have a difficult examination to go through, and to have all these troubles to bear besides. I can hear his "Mais non, maman; mais non, maman," still.

With his usual kindness, de Lesseps made room for me on the sofa, and I sat down by his side. He patted my hand as though it were I who stood in need of consolation (as indeed I did), and said:

"I have had my good days and I have had my bad days. These are bad days; they will pass like the rest."

I made no reference to the catastrophe, but talked to him of other things. I told him the gossip of the

boulevard, and made him laugh with Aurelien Scholl's latest *mot*. Every now and then one of the children ran up and hugged and kissed the old man, and called him "Papa chéri," and it was pleasant indeed to see how his face lit up as he returned their caresses.

I had a long talk with Madame de Lesseps that afternoon, and I admired her immensely for her devotion to her husband. It was a great blessing that the poor old man—he was eighty-six then—had this splendid woman, so full of courage and energy, by his side when the storm broke over his head.

I asked her how he was bearing it.

She said: "He says very little. He is not what he was before the company failed, and this last blow has had less effect upon him now he has survived the failure of his great ambition three years than it would have had then. He is easy, with an easy conscience. His only regret is for France and for the faithful who followed him. He regrets their losses bitterly. He has often said so to me, and I know that it is so. But he feels assured that, with the exception of the yelping curs from the blackmailing offices of newspaper and finance blacklegs, everybody believes in his sincerity. And that is so. We have had proof of it over and over again. Look at all these letters."

I glanced at some of the papers which the Countess laid before me. There was one in the palsied writing of a man sick abed, which spoke of "all my heartfelt sympathy," and which was signed: "Votre vraiment bien affectionné, Dom Pedro," coming from the ex-Emperor of Brazil, who was then lying ill at Vichy. A high dignitary of the Catholic Church wrote: "Mais il est écrit quelque part que tous les grands hommes auront leur Calvaire, comme le divin Maître."





*Photo by Gerschel, Paris.*

COMTESSE DE LESSEPS.



"I have hundreds of such letters," she said.

Then she made me sit down right opposite to her, and said: "I want to talk to you. I have got a lot on my heart, and it will relieve me if I can say it right out. Will you listen to me, and not interrupt me, and let me go on to the end? Then I will give you tea."

This is in brief what she wanted to say to me, and said with her eyes flashing and her colour mounting:

"I am a God-fearing woman, and I believe in a hereafter, and it sometimes seems to me that my husband was sent on earth to do a great work, and that he is an angel. An angel he certainly is in simplicity and goodness and loyalty. There has never been a more unselfish man than he is. His whole life protests against the abominable charges that his enemies are making against him. He devoted himself to France. He wished to bestow on France the splendid enterprise of the Panama Canal. He believed in it heart and soul. When it failed . . . well, you have seen he is not the same man. This prosecution, which commences with my husband's appearance before the Court of Appeal on Monday next, is the culminating point of the base malice and vengeance of his enemies. Why has he enemies? Why, because he succeeded; because Suez is each year becoming more and more his splendid triumph. Suez is earning so much money, and making so many fortunes, that it prevents many an envious soul from sleeping. His great enemy throughout has been M. Christophle, backed, I believe, by some men in power.

"But there have been enemies on every side. Why, at the last *émission*, as we know for a fact, a thousand telegrams were sent out from Paris stating that my husband had committed suicide, and publishing other lies with the object of spoiling the loan. Till then the

*agents de change* everywhere had been assured that the loan would be covered three times over. People have never pardoned him for Suez. The foulest stories about him, about myself, even, have been made current over and over again. Why, about ten years ago it was gravely announced that I had eloped with a captain of artillery, and that I was being confined clandestinely in a village near Paris. A very probable story, *n'est-ce-pas ?* that I should elope with an artillery captain !

“To-day, when our enemies have succeeded, as they think, in bringing disgrace upon him, the vilest stories are passed about. We are said to have hoarded millions. They say that we have forty millions in the Bank of England. Where are these forty millions ? The contrary is true. If you wish to convince yourself of it, you may go from me to our notary and our solicitor. They will tell you the exact figure of the sums we have lost : I have not got it at the tip of my tongue, but there is one thing that I do know, and that is, that before the failure of the Panama Company I had of my own fortune a sum of sixty thousand francs coming in annually, and that that has all been swept away. I know that when we married our daughter a little while ago we gave her a *dot* of which most people would be ashamed. Yes, the daughter of the creator of Suez received a marriage portion of a bare one hundred thousand francs. I don't mean to say that we are totally ruined, but I mean to say that, financially speaking, we are perhaps the largest sufferers by the Panama crash. We have a fortune still, of course, which we derive from Monsieur de Lesseps' interest in Suez. We shan't be obliged to go *en famille* on to the Pont de l'Alma and beg for our bread. Would it be fair, do you think, that the family of Ferdinand de Lesseps, who gave Suez to France, should hold out their

hands on the Pont de l'Alma? Yet that is what a great many people seem to desire to see. We lost all that we had in Panama. It is an infamous lie to say that one centime of the money that was subscribed to that enterprise benefited us in any way. And whilst I am speaking about this, let me say that the attacks which are being made against Charles de Lesseps and my other stepsons are one in point of infamy with the attacks which are being made upon us.

“Both my stepsons are thoroughly honourable men. Being the sons of Ferdinand de Lesseps, they could not be otherwise. People say that the Count knew some time beforehand that the crash was coming, and took the precaution to sell out all his shares. It is exactly the opposite that is true. Until the very last he believed in its success.

“I, for my part, was very nervous. You see, it was my children's fortunes that were at stake, and I remember saying to him on one occasion that perhaps it would be more judicious to invest the large sums which we had invested in the Panama Canal shares, in some more absolutely safe securities. He almost got angry with me, and cried out, ‘Madame, are the children my children or are they Rothschild's children? If they are Rothschild's children, let us think of securing their fortunes; if they are mine, they shall follow my fortune, and stand or fall with me.’ And so the money went and to-day we are much poorer than we were then.

“Ferdinand de Lesseps is not a speculator, and never has been. I remember that when Suez Canal shares were standing at seven hundred francs I came in for a little residuary legacy from my father's estate, fifty thousand francs invested in Austrians, and I said to my husband that I thought that it would be a good thing to sell out and



invest this money in Suez, as I believed that they were certain to rise. He was angry, and rebuked me for my apparent love of speculation, and would not allow me to sell out; so you can compute just what that cost us in hard cash, seeing to what the seven hundred franc shares have risen since then.

“It is a shame!” she cried, springing to her feet. “Such ingratitude is a shame! But it is the fate of all great men, as Monseigneur writes me and as others have written to me. It is the reward of greatness to be sacrificed. Mention one great man in France who has not been rewarded in this way! But it is the same in other countries. One need but remember Columbus. But I don’t know why I get angry like this. It is what one must expect in France, governed as she is at present. And, moreover, though our enemies think that they have triumphed, and that they have succeeded in besmirching the great name of the Great Frenchman, they have done nothing of the sort. I have shown you some of the letters that we have received; I have hundreds more upstairs from all parts of France and from all sorts and conditions of men. The belief in de Lesseps is as strong as ever; it is only that his enemies are noisier now than they have been for some time. A man like Ferdinand de Lesseps is not to be besmirched. There are certain people who are above the attacks of the mob.”

I wrote that night to London about the prosecution, and I said that the evil things that were being said about Ferdinand de Lesseps were too despicable for comment. Indeed, I think that his beautiful and courageous wife, in the words that I have quoted above, and his friends in the letters that I had read, made all the comment that was required on the actions of those who put on an old

man of eighty-six, who had given millions in the past, and a source of millions for the future to his country, and who was then poorer himself than he had been twenty years previously, the affront of a summons into a public court of justice. What would have been one's indignation if one had known how mercilessly the poor old man was to be hounded into imbecility and death, while the thieves and extortioners were allowed to enjoy their gains in peace and quiet?

## CHAPTER X

After the *Débâcle*—A Visit to La Chesnaye—A House of Mourning—How De Lesseps and his Family were beloved—The Lesseps Children and their Stepbrother Charles—Ferdinand de Lesseps portrayed—Renan's Tribute—Friends in Adversity—The Family at Luncheon—De Lesseps' Hope in Queen Victoria—My Last View of the Great Frenchman.

SOME months later—in the spring of 1892—I paid another visit to Ferdinand de Lesseps. In the following pages I give the account of this visit, which I wrote at the time. I was not to see the old man again.

Seated in an arm-chair, now feebly turning over the leaves of his *Souvenirs of Forty Years*, now letting his dimmed eyes wander listlessly over the broad expanse of fields and woodlands outside the windows, Ferdinand de Lesseps, the great Frenchman, drags out the agony of his old age.

The visitor to him in his retreat arrives at La Chesnaye to some extent attuned to melancholy, for the long diligence ride from the nearest railway station, twenty-four kilometres away, is across a most desolate country. This part of the ancient Duchy of Berry is one of the districts in France which has most suffered by the ruin of the vine culture: the lands seem deserted and abandoned, the roads are neglected, and little life is seen anywhere till the sleepy burgh of Vatan is

reached. From Vatan, which is a market town on the old and now disused high road from Paris to Toulouse, to the château of La Chesnaye, there are four more kilometres of road across an equally desolate country to be taken. The buildings of the home farm are the first human habitations that one sees all the long way. An oppressive sense of desolation imposes itself on even the casual wayfarer, and prepares for the sorrowful sight that awaits him who goes to La Chesnaye to salute the fallen greatness of the old man who but two years ago was the greatest Frenchman in France.

The château of La Chesnaye, a modest country house of irregular shape, and flanked at the angles with towers, has been in the possession of M. de Lesseps for fifty years. Except for a large modern wing, it stands just as Agnes Sorel, its first occupant, left it. In her days it had served as a hunting-box for her royal patron and the Berry squires, and at present is still surrounded with fields scantily timbered. There is no well-kept lawn, but the fields of grass are full of violets, and there is a trim look about the stables. On a bright day the white of the stone, contrasted with the green of the grass, gives a cheerful look to the scene, but it is indescribably mournful of aspect in the days of rain and snow and wind. About half a mile on the road, before the château is in sight, an avenue of trees is reached.

“Those trees were planted by M. de Lesseps himself forty years ago, and every time that he passes this way he relates the fact.”

So spoke to me the English governess of the de Lesseps children, whom Madame de Lesseps had despatched to meet me with the pony carriage at Vatan.

“The Countess is terribly busy to-day with her papers, for she is expecting a barrister from Paris, who is to receive some instructions in view of the new trial ; but she will manage to give you an hour, and wants you to drive to church with her, so that you can talk on the way.”

As we entered the courtyard the Countess's carriage was in waiting at the front entrance. It was the landau of the days of triumphant drives in the Champs Elysées, and the horses were the same pair which excited the admiration and envy of the connoisseurs of the Avenue des Acacias, “Juliette” and “Panama,” which latter is now never called by that name. It is talked about as “the other,” for the ill-fated word Panama is never even whispered, lest any echo of it should reach the ears of him to whom this word has meant ruin and disgrace and a broken heart.

I waited for the Countess at the bottom of the spiral staircase, and presently saw a lady descending, who greeted me in a familiar voice, but whom I failed to recognise.

“But, yes,” she said, holding out her hand, “I am Madame de Lesseps. I have changed, have I not?”

When I last met Madame de Lesseps in Paris, though at that time the shadow of the present was already upon her, she was in the full of her matronly beauty, large, ample, and flourishing. It was a wasted woman who addressed me, pinched and thin.

“If I were to remove my veil,” she added, “you would see an even greater change. It is a sad moment that you have chosen to visit us, and you find us in terrible circumstances,” she said as we drove away. Then, turning to the lady who accompanied her, she remarked: “This is the first time I have been out for



three weeks, and I ought not to have gone out to-day, except for the fact that I can't miss going to church again. It is the only comfort I have left to me. All my days, and most of my nights, when not attending on my husband, are taken up answering letters and telegrams which keep pouring in upon me from all parts of the world. And then I am in constant correspondence with the lawyers in Paris as to the prosecution of my son for corruption and the revision of the last judgment of the Court of Appeal."

The church which is attended by the La Chesnaye party is situated in a village about three miles off, which is called Guilly, "the mistletoe hamlet," as all the trees around are covered with this parasite.

We were passing a fine old oak, the upper part of which was loaded with mistletoe, when the lady who was with us laughed scornfully, and, pointing, said: "One would say Herz, Arton, and the rest," referring to the Panama parasites.

"Would you believe me," said Madame de Lesseps, "that until these recent revelations I had never even heard the names of either Arton or Herz or the Baron de Reinach?"

Outside the church was standing a *char-à-banc* drawn by two horses, and it was in this that, after service, I returned to La Chesnaye with the children and the governess. It was interesting to see how devoted the people of Guilly seem to be to the de Lesseps family, and how the men and women bowed and courtesied as the Countess came out of church. Here, as at Vatan and in all the district, the love and respect for "Monsieur le Comte" have been increased rather than diminished by the persecutions to which he has been subjected. It was on the great fair-day at Vatan

that the news of his condemnation was made public, and at once the villagers, in sign of mourning, stopped the public ball, which is a *fête* to which the young people of the district look forward for months beforehand.

Sturdy Berrichon lads have been seen to flourish their sticks and heard to say that the Parisians had better keep their hands off "Monsieur le Comte." Nor is it surprising that in his own country M. de Lesseps should be loved and venerated. Always delighting in acts of kindness, his generosity towards his poor neighbours throughout the district has been constant and large-handed. Never a marriage takes place in any of the surrounding villages but that a handsome present from La Chesnaye is thrown into the bride's *corbeille*. The children are dressed for confirmation at the expense of the château, layettes are found for poor mothers, and no case of distress is allowed to pass unrelieved. Since the heavy losses which the Panama failure has entailed on the family, no change nor diminution in these liberalities has been made.

But perhaps what the people in the district like the best in the La Chesnaye folk is their extreme simplicity. Château folk are not generally very popular in France, and certainly not in republican circumscriptions, because republican electors of the peasant class have inherited prejudices about them; and if the de Lesseps family are so very popular, it is because of the extreme simplicity of their manners and of the way in which they live the lives of the people around them. For instance, not the children alone, but even the elegant Madame de Lesseps herself, are dressed in clothes purchased and made in Vatan. Nothing is got from Paris, and the Vatan people are highly pleased with the unusual compliment thus paid to them.

By the church at Guilly is an orphanage, which was founded by the de Lesseps and is entirely kept up at their expense. It is a rule with Madame de Lesseps to pay a visit to this orphanage each Sunday after mass, and, accordingly, as she left the church she asked me to return home with the children. Of these there are now seven at home, Matthew, who has just returned on sick leave from the Soudan, being in Paris near his stepbrother Charles. Ismail is serving in the army as a soldier in a regiment of *chasseurs* at St. Germain; and the eldest daughter, the Comtesse de Gontaut-Biron, is in Nice, whither she has been sent by her doctors. Lolo, aged eighteen, is the eldest girl at home; and Paul, a handsome lad of twelve, with long ringlets down his back, is the eldest boy. The youngest children are mere babies. There is Zi-Zi, a tiny little boy, with fair curls and dark eyes; and Griselle, a charming little mite, who on that Sunday was dressed in a Kate Greenaway bonnet and gown, and looked sweetly pretty.

The *char-à-banc*, spacious as it was, was quite filled. Besides all the children, from Lolo down to Zi-Zi, there were the English and German governesses, Paul and Robert's tutor, the niece of Madame de Lesseps, who for many years past has lived with the family, and an intimate friend, Mademoiselle Mimaut.

It was a merry party, and yet, whenever the name of the poor old father at home was mentioned, silence came over the prattle of the children. "They all feel it deeply," said Madame de Lesseps to me later on, "though their youth often gets the better of their feelings. And what grieves them most is, to know that their brother Charles, whom they all love and respect like a second father, is in prison, whilst they can run

about. Zi-Zi and Griselle write to him every day at Mazas or the Conciergerie, and send him violets and little stories which they compose for his amusement, spending long hours inking their fingers over their paper."

About halfway home the carriage passed the rural postman, trudging along on his daily thirty-mile round. The children would have the carriage stopped, and, though it was quite full, place was made for him. Father Pierre seemed quite a favourite with the children, for is it not he, as little Griselle said, who brings letters from brother Charles? Charles, it seems, writes every day, and his letters, to judge by what every member of the family told me, are admirable in their manly unselfishness. There is never a word of complaint about the wretchedness of his position; his only anxiety is about his father, and he is ready to undergo everything so that the old man may be spared a moment's pain. Ruined, disgraced, though not dishonoured, having to face a long period of imprisonment, which at his age and in his physical condition may kill him, he affects in his letters the greatest cheerfulness.

Nor is his heroic unselfishness without its reward. He is the idol of everybody at La Chesnaye and for miles around. Only one complaint has escaped him since his confinement, and that was when, during his hurried visit, under guard, to his father, he went with the children for a favourite walk to a neighbouring wood. Here, as he was walking along the avenue which runs through some magnificent timber, he looked around at the detectives behind him, and said with a sigh, "And to-morrow I shall be again within four grey walls!" But immediately he added that if he could only be allowed to come and pass an afternoon in the wood with his

brothers and sisters every month, he would not mind his confinement in the least, and would resign himself to the prospect of imprisonment for the rest of his days. Yet he is past fifty-three, and his health has suffered terribly from what he has undergone.

The half hour before lunch was spent by the children in showing their pets. A prime favourite with them just now is a little Newfoundland puppy, which has quite dethroned in their affections an old shepherd dog, who, as Zi-Zi relates, "came one day and liked us so much that she has never left us." Another pet of whom a great deal is made is an African monkey which Matthew brought home from the Soudan. It is called Bou-Bou, and when it is scolded it hides its face in its hands. It is quite tame, and runs free, without a chain.

Just before lunch the children set about picking violets, each a bunch. This they do every day. One is for Charles at Mazas, another for Madame de Lesseps, but the sweetest is for the old father to wear in his buttonhole at lunch, which is the only meal he takes with the family. The child whose bouquet is worn by the father is the proudest child in Berry that day.

I could not refrain from a movement of the most painful surprise when, after a few moments spent in the drawing-room, I was invited by Madame de Lesseps into the room where her husband sat. I have known M. de Lesseps for many years, and though the last time that I saw him he was already under the influence of the sorrow of defeat—it was just after he had been called before a magistrate for examination—my recollection of him had always been as of a man of most surprising vitality and highest spirits—keen, bright, energetic; defying the wear of time; a man of eternal youth in spite of



his white hairs. I remembered him last erect, with clear voice and flashing eyes, and now I saw him huddled together in a chair, a wrap about his knees, nodding his head as under sleep; pale, inert, and with all the life gone out of his eyes. Behind him was a large screen tapestried with red stuff, against which the waxen whiteness of his face and hands stood out in strong relief.

How old he looked, whom age had seemed to spare so long! For the most part the head drooped forward on his chest; but now and then he raised it listlessly and let his eyes wander round the room or across the panes on to the fields beyond. There was rarely recognition in his glance; mostly a look of unalterable sadness—of wonder, it may be, at the terrible hazards of life. Yet when now and then one of the children, who were crowding about his chair, pressed his hand or kissed his cheek or said some words of endearment to him, the smile which was one of his characteristics came over his face, and for a brief moment he seemed himself again. Himself again, that is to say, in the goodness and great-heartedness which more than all he has ever done for France merited for him the name of “the Great Frenchman.” For greatness of heart has always been the keynote of the character of Ferdinand de Lesseps. It was the secret of the indescribable seduction which he exercised over every one who came near him, from emperor to labourer. It was to this quality of his that M. Renan, albeit a sceptic himself, rendered such signal homage in the speech in which he welcomed M. de Lesseps to the French Academy on the day of his admittance.

“You were good to all who came,” said M. Renan. “You made them feel that their past would be effaced

and that a new life lay before them. In exchange you only asked them to share your enthusiasm in the work which you had devoted to the interest of France. You held that most people can amend, if only one will forget their past. One day a whole gang of convicts arrived at Panama and took work at the canal. The Austrian consul demanded that they should be handed over to him; but you delayed giving satisfaction to his request, and at the end of some weeks the Austrian consulate was fully occupied in remitting home to Austria—to their families, or, it may be, to their victims—the moneys which these outcasts, whom you had transformed into honest workmen, were earning with the work of their hands.

“You have declared your faith in humanity. You have convinced yourself, and tried to convince others, that men are loyal and good if only they have the wherewithal to live. It is your opinion that it is only hunger that makes men bad. ‘Never,’ said you in one of your speeches, ‘have I had cause for complaint against any of the workmen, although I have employed outcasts, pariahs, and convicts. Work has redeemed even the most dishonest. I have never been robbed, not even of a handkerchief. It is a fact which I have proved, that men can be brought to do anything by showing them kindness and by persuading them that they are working in a cause of universal interest.’ Thus you have made green again what seemed withered for ever and aye. You have given, in a century of unbelief, a startling proof of the efficacy of faith.”

In view of the awful change that, within so short a time, has been made in this gentleman, I cannot but think that it must be attributed to the shock produced in a very old man by an experience which shows him

that he has been mistaken all his life long. It is terrible to wake up at eighty-five and find that things are not what one has believed during his past life, and that the men whom one has loved and respected are unworthy. I believe that what has struck Ferdinand de Lesseps down in his chair in full vitality is an immense disappointment, not at the failure of his hopes—for he has always been indifferent to money, and has never had the wish to leave his children large fortunes—but at the falseness of a creed which was optimistic to the point of blindness.

I believe that Ferdinand de Lesseps is dying of a broken heart, broken by the immense ingratitude of men. And if the loss of all the money that has been sunk in the Panama mud and the pockets of the *intrigants* of the Third Republic adds to his sorrow, it is certainly not for himself nor his family, but for all those who are suffering because they shared his belief in his star, and who blindly followed him to ruin. He knew that they were of the humble, and often told me so. "Panama will be carried out with the savings in woollen stockings of the peasant and of the workman," he used to say.

He has never been self-seeking. He presented France with a concession, that of the Suez Canal, estimated at one hundred millions of francs, and with lands worth another thirty millions, and fought heroically for years to render to his gift its greatest value. In the words of M. Renan, the courage, the energy, the resources of all sorts expended by M. de Lesseps in this struggle were nothing short of prodigious. In exchange he took for himself enough to enable him to lead the life of a gentleman and to do good around him. Each of his children he endowed with not more than

seventy thousand francs, the revenues from which, together with his wife's private fortune, are now all that remain to the family.

I firmly believe that all his life he acted only from feelings of philanthropy and from patriotism of the most chivalrous type. He never had any desire to leave a large fortune, and I can remember his saying to me very emphatically that his children must do as he had done, and that they would do so if they were worthy of his name; that he had never wished to leave them large fortunes, but an honourable name, a love for their country equal to his, and an example which he hoped they would follow. "Let them work as I have done," said this most tender of fathers.

It seems that not even this heritage of an honoured name is, if the persecutors of the old man can have their way, to be left to his family. Since he has been down, the number of his adversaries has, of course, increased tenfold. Even those who owe him all—many officials at the Suez Canal Company, for instance, who owe their positions and fortunes to his genius—seem glad to revenge themselves for their obligation. De Lesseps has done too much good to men not to be hated, and it is to be regretted that poor de Maupassant cannot wield his pen in analysis of the motives which are actuating his former dependants in their endeavours to renounce all solidarity with the dying octogenarian of La Chesnaye.

I visited the offices of the Suez Canal Company a few days ago, and, prepared as one is for human ingratitude, it was distressing in the extreme to see how poor a thing to charm with was the name at the sound of which, as I can well remember, all the flunkeys of the place, in livery or black frock-coat, doubled up in the

days that are past. The lion is down, and every ass of Paris has a heel to kick him with.

On the other hand, the adversities of the de Lesseps family have revealed to them the immense number of friends which they possess in all parts of the world. Letters and telegrams keep pouring in from all sides to La Chesnaye, and all the available pens are kept busy most of the day and night in answering the kindest expressions of sympathy, many from utter strangers. "This is the only thing that gives me courage to bear it all," said Madame de Lesseps. H el ene told me, with some amusement, that a Spanish banker had the day before written to Madame de Lesseps to offer her a present of a million, and that there had been many similar offers of pecuniary assistance from people who believed the family to be totally ruined. When Charles was down at La Chesnaye, and was walking in the woods with his escort behind him, a serious proposal was made to him by friends who had gathered around him to effect his rescue, if he would but give the word.

As for tokens of sympathy from all the country round, they are unending. The farmer at the home farm, which was built by M. de Lesseps, and which has been in the occupation of the present tenants from the beginning, was at dinner when the paper containing the news of Charles's conviction and sentence reached him. "He turned quite white," said his wife to me, "and rushed out of the house, and went roaming about the woods like a demented man until late at night. And I have cried every time I have thought of M. Charles, whom I knew when he was a baby not higher than my knee."

But perhaps the most devoted friend that remains to the family is M. de Lesseps' valet, who since his



master's fall has never left him for more than ten minutes together, sleeping on a mattress in his bedroom, and waiting on him patiently all day and all night. "Don't let any one, I don't care who it may be," he says, clenching his fist, "come near my master. I will be killed before any offence shall be put upon him." And though one is rather sceptical as to such professions, I fully believe that in this case they are sincere. It was touching to note with what reverence, when lunch was served, this valet approached his master, and, mindful of old formalities of respect, bowed and said that Monsieur the Count was served; to note with what womanly gentleness this strong man lifted his feeble master up, and guided his tottering steps into the adjoining dining-room.

What a beautiful family it was, to be sure, that gathered round that table!—Paul, with his girlish ringlets; Robert, also in curls; Hélène, who sat next to her father, with her jet-black hair loose down her back, and her bright eyes contrasting with the ivory pallor of her face, worn out as the poor child is with care and sorrow and hard work as her mother's penwoman. Then there was Lolo, a young lady of eighteen, roughly dressed, but of great elegance, who looked even sadder than the rest, but who tried to be bright and gay; and on the other side of her Solange, who, though she is quite a woman in appearance, hates to be considered so, wants to be treated as a child, refuses to wear long dresses, and loves to climb trees in the park and to give picnics to her little brothers and sisters in a mud hovel which she has constructed in the garden. Then there are Zi-Zi and Griselle—more than twenty in all around the long oval table. Every now and then one of the children rises from its seat and runs up to

the old father and kisses him on the cheek or presses his hand; and I think all envied H el ene, who sat next to him, and could caress him when she liked. I was seated just opposite the old man, and I am afraid my presence disturbed him, for he seemed to listen to what I said, and to wonder who I was and what I might want.

I shall never forget the sight of him as he faced me, sunk down in his chair, with one trembling hand holding his napkin to his breast, and feebly with the other guiding the morsels to his mouth. He seemed to eat with some appetite, though under persistent drowsiness, which was only shaken off for a moment when his wife, who came in late, took her seat at the table. Then his head was lifted, and a bright look came into his eyes, as if of salute to the comrade of his life. Whatever Madame de Lesseps may have suffered, I am sure that she feels herself repaid each time that those eyes are so lifted to hers.

The *d ejeuner* was a simple though ample one, the *menu* being in keeping with the manner of life at Chesnaye, which is that of comfort without ostentation. The wine is grown by Madame de Lesseps herself, on vineyards of her own planting, and is that "grey wine" which is so much appreciated by connoisseurs. It has a beautiful colour in a cut-glass decanter.

The conversation was a halting one. Each tried to be gay, each tried to forget the deep shadow that lay over that family gathering. When the old man's eyes wandered around the table as if in quest of some one whom he desired, but who was not there, a silence imposed itself on all, for all knew whom he was seeking and where that dear one was. In his buttonhole was H el ene's bouquet of violets, underneath which peeped

out the rosette of the Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour—alas, in jeopardy!

We took coffee in the drawing-room. It was served on a table which stood underneath a fine portrait of Agnes Sorel, once the mistress of the house. Facing us were two pictures of the inauguration of the Suez Canal. The furniture was covered with tapestries, mostly from the needle of the Countess.

It was here that Madame de Lesseps told me of the old man's present life. "He has the fixed idea that the Queen of England will come and make all things right. He often rises in his chair and asks if Queen Victoria has arrived, and when any visitor comes he thinks it is she at last."

Then blanching, the Countess added, "You think, sir, do you not, that he is in ignorance of what has happened? You do not think that he has any suspicion? Sometimes the dreadful thought troubles me that he knows all, and that, great-hearted gentleman that he is, he lends himself to this most tragic comedy that we are playing. I sometimes doubt. Would not that be terrible? And again there are times when I am convinced that our efforts to hide all that is are successful. We give him last year's papers to read. I have had collections sent down. Formerly we used to cut out or erase parts which we did not want him to see, but he seemed to notice the alterations, and so we ordered down papers of a year ago. And it is quite pathetic to hear the remarks he occasionally makes. Thus a few days ago he called me to his side in high glee, and said how happy he was to hear that his old friend M. Resson had been appointed Italian Ambassador to France, an event of more than a year ago. There are times, too, when he gets very impatient at being kept down here,

and what he misses chiefly is the French Academy. He is constantly telling me how anxious he is to attend, and I have to invent the sorriest fables to explain to him that the Academicians are not holding any meetings, as, for instance, that they are all old men, and that they are taking a long holiday."

The Countess sighed, and said, "I do what I can, but that terrible doubt pursues me often. You see, he did know that the Panama affair had resulted in ruin. It is since he was called before that examining magistrate, M. Prinot, that he has been as you have seen him. He must suspect something. How much we shall never know."

Then she added, "He is constantly asking after Charles. He knows that he is in trouble, but we hope that he does not suspect what the trouble is. Before he was taken as he is, Charles had, to his knowledge, become involved in that Société des Comptes Courants bankruptcy, which ruined him, and perhaps his father thinks that his son's troubles are in connection with that affair."

Then the stepmother broke out into impassioned praise of the stepson: "The noblest heart! He will suffer all, rather than let the slightest harm come to his father. He is a hero, a gentleman!—a hero, a hero! When he was here he told us what he had undergone, and said that he was willing to undergo ten times as much, so that his father be left unmolested.

"It is strangers who send us expressions of their sympathy. Those whom de Lesseps has enriched have forgotten him. And yet I am unjust. I have had letters from people who risked their positions, their daily bread, in writing to me as they did. But not a single political man has written a word to express condolence with the

great patriot or with his family. They dare not. None of my letters are safe. Many of my friends have received my letters open. Many letters addressed to me have gone astray. It is dangerous to-day to be the friend of the man who gave a fortune to his country.

“He sits there all day,” she continued, “and reads his *Souvenirs of Forty Years*, the souvenirs which he has dedicated to his children. And at times he is quite his old self again; but drowsiness is always coming upon him. *Mon Dieu!* that he may be spared to us a little longer!”

Hélène just then passed through the room. “There is a paper in papa’s room,” she whispered, “which I must take away. There is the word Panama upon it.”

Our conversation was held with bated breath, and the ill-fated word was scouted like an unclean thing.

And whilst we were talking, the sunny, curly-headed Paul ran into the room and cried out, “Oh, do come and see papa! Bou-Bou has jumped on to his shoulder and is picking his violets.”

We moved towards the door, and this was the last that I saw, or may ever see, of Ferdinand de Lesseps.<sup>1</sup> Against the red background of the two-fold screen he sat, sunken asleep in his arm-chair, with the two volumes

<sup>1</sup> I was never to see him again. He died about eighteen months later, with the resignation of a Christian martyr. As he lay on his death-bed, so I have been told, he looked like a young man again, with all the care and trouble wiped away from his noble face.

Since then the children whom I had known as little ones have all grown up. Seven of them are married and have children of their own. Madame de Lesseps has now ten grandchildren. The youngest daughter, who was a baby in a pinafore when I visited La Chesnaye, has recently become engaged to be married. One could wish for no better memorial to the Great Frenchman than this large descendance, by whom his name will be handed down to the generations yet to come with the love and veneration which it so well deserves.



that tell the story of his heroism in his lap, and on his shoulders perched a grinning Barbary ape, pulling at and munching the violets which H el ene had picked for him, and which hid in his buttonhole his jeopardised rosette of the Legion of Honour. Around him stood his children, and it was sad to see, and sadder still to think, that, his family excepted, what holds this great heart and splendid gentleman in dearest affection is not the millionaire grown rich on his achievements, but a witless, speechless thing, that perhaps has feeling what a great and generous heart is here.

## CHAPTER XI

Mon sieur Eiffel—Meetings with him in Elevated Spheres—His Visit to England—“A Magnificent Experience”—A Tribute to English Railways—The Firth of Forth Bridge—The Prince and the Engineer—The Eloquence of the Weather—“The Ascertained Average”—“Per £40,000 Life”—“The Most Remarkable Construction, bar none”—Edison and Eiffel—Eiffel’s Modesty.

IT was Monsieur de Lesseps who introduced me to Eiffel, and I saw a good deal of that famous engineer. A great many people who lost their money in the Panama Canal Scheme have very bitter things to say about him; even his complete downfall and disgrace have not satisfied their rancours; they are pleased that with his own hands he raised to himself, so high that all the world may see it, a memorial tower which none looks at without remembering a certain verdict and a certain judgment.

For my part I can only say that Monsieur Eiffel always impressed me as being a straightforward, plain-spoken business man, as full of energy as he seemed devoid of cunning. I cannot now believe that there was duplicity in his conduct towards Lesseps. I always knew him as a rich man, who could command any capital that he needed for any enterprise, and who had far more work brought to his office than he could possibly attend to. I have been in his company on many occasions, and I liked him better each time I saw him. I had a very sincere admiration for his quiet, determined air. He

was the ideal type of the engineer. I never yet saw a Frenchman who resembled him. It is true that his enemies say that he had no French blood in him.

We met in society; we met in the not less exalted sphere of his office at the very top of the tower, just under the lightning conductor, where one afternoon he entertained me, and gave me full technical details about this colossal undertaking. I also frequently saw him in his office in town, which was close to the expiatory chapel of Louis XVI., in a quiet street of that quiet quarter. His business premises occupied a whole house, which was home-like and English in its exterior appearance, and, like the man himself, quiet, reserved, and modest. On the door was a small brass plate with Eiffel's name upon it. The interior was luxuriously furnished; one was impressed with the fact that this was the abode of a successful and prospering man. The entrance hall was thickly carpeted, and was gay with flowers and palms. The waiting-room was a very *salon*, most sumptuously furnished, the walls being hung with plans and designs of gigantic enterprises, accomplished or under consideration. Footmen in livery were in attendance. An adjoining room was Eiffel's private office. It was soberly but richly furnished, and was similarly decorated with pictures of his triumphs over iron and steel. Eiffel's table was at the far end of this room, a plain working-table. His son-in-law sat opposite to him. Between them on the wall were all kinds of electrical apparatus for killing space and time.

I remember calling on him here one day shortly after his visit to England, whither he had gone, in company with other distinguished Frenchmen, to be present at the inauguration of the Firth of Forth Bridge. We had on that occasion a long conversation about

this structure and about English railways, in the course of which the famous engineer paid a very high tribute to our country. He spoke of his visit as "a magnificent experience," and he said, "What perhaps struck me most during my journey in England was the admirable arrangements which regulate your railway traffic, the special conditions of comfort that are to be found in railway-travelling in England, the rapidity of the trains, the easiness of the motion, the perfect discipline of the men, and the absolute regularity of the service throughout. In all these respects English railway-travelling compares most favourably with that in any other country that I know. I include France in the comparison. The speed of your trains is remarkable. I am sure that on my way to Scotland the average speed at which we travelled was forty-five kilometres, while at certain periods during the run it must have exceeded one hundred kilometres an hour. Well, even when we were travelling at the highest rate of speed the motion was one of delicious ease. There was no straining, no jolting, no sickening swaying from side to side. We ran as a sledge runs over level ice. Your railway men have suppressed the fatigue of railway travelling, and I was particularly grateful for the fact, for I was very tired when I set out for Scotland, having been hurried from the banquet-hall into the train. *J'en étais ravi*. As an engineer I was struck with the absolute regularity of the onward movement of the train, its perfect uniformity, showing the excellent construction of your iron roads. When a railway is badly constructed the traveller feels the changes in speed, now slow, now fast, and a very uncomfortable feeling it is. On the English railways that sensation is never experienced!"

The other day, when I was travelling in Poland,

Eiffel's words came back to me at each nauseating roll and lurch of the train. One must go abroad to appreciate the good things that are in England.

Eiffel was very enthusiastic about the Forth Bridge. He said, "I was very much struck by it. *J'en étais tout-à-fait frappé*. And I may say the same of all my French colleagues. I consider that its construction in no single point leaves anything to be desired. It is a piece of work which does the greatest possible honour to English engineering, even without taking the special difficulties which stood in the way of the engineers into consideration. These were colossal. The high winds that sweep down the Firth at all times, the terrible agitation of the waters, the enormous distance from pillar to pillar.

"The weather which we had on the day of inauguration opened our eyes to what your engineers had had to contend with. His Royal Highness said to me, while we were on the bridge: 'I am sorry, Monsieur Eiffel, that we can't offer you better weather for your visit.' I answered, 'Your Highness will allow me to differ. The weather could not be better for us. It shows us what difficulties were put in the way of the men who built this bridge.'

"And, indeed, the howling of the winds and the hissing of the waters below were eloquent in the extreme of the skill and resolution of these men. Each hat that was blown away off some visitor's head was a bravo in their honour. And, *apropos* of the dangers and difficulties of the enterprise, there is another thing connected with this construction that shows how thoroughly competent were the engineers: the number of workmen who were killed during the carrying out of the work was much below the ascertained average."



I confess that I felt a shiver running over me as Eiffel said these words in his cold, matter-of-fact way. I gasped out, “The ascertained average?” “Yes, it has been ascertained by statistical observation that in engineering enterprises, one man is killed for every million francs that is spent on the work. Thus, supposing you have to build a bridge at an expense of one hundred million francs, you must be prepared for the death of one hundred men. In building the Eiffel Tower, which was a construction costing six million and a half, we only lost four men, thus remaining below the average. In the construction of the Forth Bridge, fifty-five men were lost over forty-five million francs’ worth of work. Here the average is much exceeded; but when the special risks are remembered, this number shows as a very small one, and reflects very great credit on the engineers for the precautions which they took on behalf of their men.”

Some days later I met Eiffel at a dinner-party, and once more heard him talking of his visit. He was asked what had been his first impression of the bridge when it came in view. He said: “I had studied the plans and pictures of the bridge before I saw it, and so went prepared for a grand sight. But what I had imagined was nothing compared to the reality. My first impression was one of amazement. It was grandiose.”

A gentleman said: “What place would you give to the Firth of Forth Bridge among the great constructions of the world?”

Eiffel answered in a very decisive tone: “The first absolutely; the first, bar none. It is, I consider, the most remarkable construction that the world can boast of, and the most beautiful piece of work in metal that exists, not excepting our tower, from which, as Fowler

was good enough to say, some of the inspiration which guided the engineers was drawn. I take into consideration the importance of the construction and the difficulties that stood in its way. The excessive length, for instance, that intervenes between the several pillars. It is this, indeed, which is the most remarkable feature in the construction. There is nothing like it anywhere else. Owing to the extreme depth of the water, the number of pillars had to be a very small one, and consequently the span of each of the arches had to be very large, larger than in any railway bridge that has ever yet been constructed. Certainly there are longer bridges in the world, but the merit of this construction lies in the very great difficulties attaching to it."

He was asked his opinion on the cantilever system, which since those days has been largely introduced into bridge-building in France. He said: "I have never made use of it myself in any of my constructions; and, indeed, there is only one bridge in France where it was used, and that is the Viaur Viaduct. It is a beautiful system. The bridge grows out and out without scaffoldings, each fresh part forming the scaffolding for the part that is to come next."

A lady wanted to know what faults Monsieur Eiffel had to find with the Forth Bridge. Had his eye noticed any defect which might some day account for a terrible tragedy? He answered in his familiar decisiveness of tone: "None at all. I can predict no tragedies. I have no fault of any kind to find with it. I am convinced that it will fulfil its purpose in every way."

"But I have been told," said the lady, "that it is the climax of what is ugly."

"Is what is useful ever ugly?" answered Monsieur Eiffel.

That evening he said to me: "I can hardly express how greatly I was gratified at the most cordial and kind reception that your compatriots gave me during my visit to England. It was touching in the extreme, and gave me more pleasure than anything that I can remember in the course of my career. The Prince was kindness itself; and then there were Mr. Fairbairn, of the Great Northern, and Sir Lowthian Bell, and Mr. Forbes, who were all most amiable. I was quite surprised to find," he added, "how popular I was in England. I had no idea of anything of the sort. Everybody seemed to take such an interest in my personality that I felt quite confused at times. Then there were photographers who wanted to take my photograph, and numbers of people wrote to me for my autograph, just as if I were a celebrity."

I looked hard at Eiffel as he spoke these words, for I could hardly believe that he was speaking seriously. But no twinkle came into his eyes; his manner was perfectly natural. Those words were typical of the man, and I often think of them, and regret that a man of such great achievements and such noble simplicity should have come to disaster.

An Englishman who was at the dinner asked Eiffel what nation took the most interest in his tower. He said that the three nations who showed themselves most impressed by that construction were the Americans first, then the Russians, and next the English. He added that, unfortunately, Sir Edward Watkin had been ill when he was in London, for he had much wanted to talk to him about his projected tower, which was to be fifty metres higher than his own. He said that he was much interested in it, although he did not see that England had any reason to desire to cap his work in

Paris, for the Forth Bridge did that. No doubt since those words were spoken a good many people have regretted that Eiffel did not meet Sir Edward Watkin, and possibly dissuade him from embarking on his ill-fated scheme.

*Apropos* of his remark that the Americans showed great interest in the Eiffel Tower, I was able to tell Monsieur Eiffel how delighted Edison had been with that construction. "I am glad to hear it," he said; "for when Edison lunched with me in my room at the top—you remember, the place where we took an *apéritif* together—he hardly spoke, and I must say I should have liked to hear his opinion."

"Edison is not a maker of phrases," I said. "I lunched with him on the tower, *chez Brébant*. We naturally talked of it. Somebody said: 'Tis the work of a bridge-builder,' with something of a sneer in his voice. 'No,' said Edison decisively—'no; it is a great idea. The glory of Eiffel is in the magnitude of the conception and the nerve in the execution. That admitted, and the money found, the rest is, if you like, mere bridge-building. I like the French,' he added; 'they have big conceptions. The English ought to take a leaf out of their book. What Englishman would have had this idea? What Englishman could have conceived the Statue of Liberty?'"

"If Monsieur Edison had said that to me," answered Eiffel, "I should respectfully have pointed out to him that the Forth Bridge is a much greater conception, and that it needed very much more nerve in its execution than my tower. But, all the same, I am much pleased to hear that Edison thought so highly of my experiment."

"Yes," I said; "but he added that New York was going to build a tower of two thousand feet in height.

‘We’ll go Eiffel 100 per cent. better,’ he said, ‘without discount.’”

“Eh, bien!” said Eiffel very quietly, “nous verrons cela.”

And, as with some other announcements that the Americans have made, we are still waiting to see.

It is a curious psychological fact that whenever the name of Eiffel occurs to me, the first thing of many things that he told me which comes into my mind is that cold-blooded statistical average which engineers have established for computing, besides the cost of an undertaking, the amount of workmen’s lives which will be sacrificed, and, further, the number of widows and fatherless children that will be created. It is necessary, indispensable, no doubt; but the absolute certitude that any undertaking which progress or speculation may dictate *must* be cemented with so much human blood impresses me always as a very mournful circumstance. And when I read of wretched criminals who have killed men and women for the sake of some paltry plunder, my indignation against them knows no bounds. Joseph Aubert, for instance, who slew a man to rob him of about eight pounds: just the five-thousandth part of the market price of a man’s life, according to engineering statistics. He merited all his punishment. One does not so outrageously cut the established rates.



## CHAPTER XII

Thomas Alva Edison—How I made his Acquaintance—A Characteristic Letter—The King's Envoyé—Count and Countess Edison—Edison's Opinion on Paris—A *Déjeuner* on the Eiffel Tower—The Simplicity of a Great Man—Edison on Electrocutation—"What is Electricity, after all?"—Edison and Mr. Gladstone—His Opinion on Eiffel, President Carnot, and Prime Minister Tirard.

**A**MONGST my most pleasant recollections of the Paris Exhibition of 1889 are the hours which I spent in the company of that great, simple man, Thomas Alva Edison. If he had never invented anything, if his name were not synonymous with some of the most marvellous inventions of human genius, if his life-story did not exemplify to what heights of wealth and influence the poorest lad may raise himself by means of certain gifts, and more particularly by means of certain qualities, such as pluck, perseverance, and total abnegation of self, he would still be the most delightful companion that a man could wish to meet. He is a big boy, full of fun and humour, simple, unaffected, and kind-hearted. He has the secret of perennial youth; for though his hair is grey, there is not a wrinkle on his forehead. It can do no one anything but much good to be in Edison's society. I know that often when I have risen, depressed and dead in heart and hope, from reading the elegies of some modern Schopenhauer, I have thought, "Oh, why is Orange

so many thousand miles of land and water away from here, and why can't I go to Edison and get him to tell me that life is a fine thing?"

When in the early part of August of that year I heard that Edison had arrived with his bride at the Hôtel du Rhin, I determined that I must make his acquaintance; and as I did not want to wait till I could get a letter of introduction to him, I wrote to him and asked him to let me come and see him. He was being inundated with letters at the time. As he told me afterwards, "An unpleasant recollection of Paris, when I get back home, will be that of the enormous number of cranks and crooks that there are here. You would be surprised to read some of the letters which I receive daily by the hundreds. I have given up looking at them at all. Some of these letters contained the strangest offers that you could imagine. Many were from inventors, who begged me to come to their places to give the last touches to some lunatical invention of theirs. There was one man who wrote several times. He had invented an electrical toothbrush or some such nonsense. But the bulk of them wanted assistance in another way. I have had hundreds of applications for loans from people of every description. The low flattery displayed in these letters is enough to sicken a man. It would have required an enormous fortune to meet all these demands. There was one young fellow who wanted me to allow him an income while he finished his studies. He hoped to get through with them in about ten years, at the end of which time he would be in a position to place a really valuable collaborator at my disposal."

The letter, however, in which, like Mr. Toots, I asked him for the pleasure of his acquaintance, brought

me an immediate and most characteristic reply, which is reproduced on opposite page.

“HÔTEL DU RHIN,  
“4. P<sup>CE</sup> VENDÔME.

“FRIEND SHERARD,—

“All right. Friday about 11 in mng.  
I'll be sane by that time. My intellect is now making  
275 revolutions a minute.

“Yours, EDISON.”

The Edisons occupied the grand first floor of the fashionable hotel, and in more ways than one the simple inventor and man of genius looked out of place in the vulgar surroundings of wealth. Of course, one knew that the shabbily dressed, ascetic-looking man could, if he chose, write out a cheque which would have represented the value of the house from ground to attic, with all that it contained, twenty times over, and the beautiful young bride had all the elegance of the wife of an American millionaire. But somehow one did not “place” Thomas Alva Edison amongst gilded furniture, with velvet curtains about him and lace hangings. He is the sort of man that one likes to see with a pen, or, better, with a pair of pliers in his hands and his shirt-sleeves tucked up. When I was ushered into the room I saw the master standing by the mantelpiece listening to an excitable little man who was dressed in the height of fashion and who was waving a box in his hand which looked like a jewel-case. He was speaking, so I heard, “in the name of humanity.” He was addressing the “King of Science,” and he was most verbose and gesticulative. I liked Edison the man before I had exchanged a single word with him, for his delightful attitude face to face with the bore. His face wore the sweetest and kindest of smiles, and he was apparently

HOTEL DU RHIN

4, P<sup>CE</sup> VENDÔME

Friend Sherard

All right, Friday

about 11. in mng. I'll be sane by

that time. My intellect is now

making 275 revolutions a minute

~~You~~

Edison

giving his entire attention to the man. I heard afterwards, however, that at such times, a certain deafness aiding, he is able to fix his thoughts elsewhere. Yet that *certain égarement* of which de la Rochefoucauld speaks is never to be noticed in his eyes.

Colonel Gouraud, who at that time was Edison's London representative, and who was present amongst other people in the drawing-room of the Hôtel du Rhin, drew me aside and said, "I may tell you something which Mr. Edison would never tell you. That gentleman who is talking to him is the Cavaliere Copello. He has just come to Paris on a special mission from the King of Italy to Mr. Edison, bringing him the insignia of Grand Officer of the Crown of Italy."

"Say, Gouraud," cried Edison, "let me see the letter that came along of the insignia." It was delightful to hear how he pronounced the last word. The tone was one of amused tolerance.

The Minister's letter was as follows :

"The presentation by Cavaliere Copello to the King, my august Sovereign, of the phonograph invented by your *Signoria*, produced the deepest impression on the mind of His Majesty, who has recorded on the machine itself his greatest admiration. The King, in consequence, wishing to give you a well-merited testimonial of honour for the great scientific discoveries which are associated with your name, so universally known, has been pleased, of his own accord, to confer upon you the rank of Grand Officer of the Crown of Italy. I am happy to present to you herewith, on behalf of His Majesty, the insignia of this high honour, and reserve to myself to send you as soon as possible the Royal letters patent of the same. In the meanwhile deign to accept, etc.

"RATTAZZI."



"This order confers upon you, sir, the title of count," said the Cavaliere Copello, "and on you, madame," he added, turning and bowing to Mrs. Edison, "the title of countess."

I wished that a few representatives of European flunkeydom could have seen Edison's face when this announcement was made to him by the little Cavaliere. He actually laughed, much to Signor Copello's astonishment, and not a little to his confusion. A few minutes later I was able to get into conversation with him. I said: "I suppose, Mr. Edison, I must ask you what you think of Paris?"

He said: "Oh, I am dazed! My head's all in a muddle, and I reckon it will take me at least a year to recover my senses. I wish now that I had come over in my laboratory blouse, and could have gone about unknown and have seen something. The Exhibition is immense, larger than our Philadelphian Exhibition. So far, however, I have seen very little of it. Still, this morning I saw a tool which will save me six thousand dollars a year. It is a chisel worked by hydraulic pressure. I just saw it as I was passing by—just a glance. I shall order some and send them out; they will enable us to reduce our labour by eighteen hands.

"What has struck me so far chiefly," he continued, "is the absolute laziness of the people over here. When do these people work? What do they work at? I have not seen a cartload of goods in the streets since I came to Paris. People here seem to have established an elaborate system of loafing. These engineers who come to see me, fashionably dressed, with walking-sticks in their hands, when do they do their work? I can't understand it at all."

I said: "We know you are terrible for work yourself.

We hear wonderful stories over here. You have the reputation of being able to work for twenty-three hours a day for an indefinite period."

"Oh!" said Edison, smiling, "I have done more than that, haven't I, Gouraud? As a rule, though, I get through twenty hours a day. I find four hours' sleep quite sufficient for all purposes."

At that time Edison was perfecting the phonograph, and I think that he entertained hopes of its usefulness which have not since been realised. I remember his saying to me: "We have got the phonograph into practical form. Already eighteen hundred machines are in use in commercial houses, and our factories are now turning out forty complete machines per diem. I have also at last been able to make a perfectly solid mailable cylinder, which can go through the post for any distance without any risk of damage. All this has been very hard work. On the tools for making the phonograph alone we spent five thousand dollars. I have also created a small model—a pocket phonograph, if you like to call it so—the cylinder of which will register three hundred words, the length of an ordinary letter, which will be very practical for ordinary correspondence. The phonograph is being used in the newspaper offices, too. It is being used in the *New York World* office. The machine is placed downstairs; the reporters come in and talk to it; then the cylinder is sent upstairs to the composing-rooms, and the compositors set up from its dictation. They attain much greater speed, make more 'ems' an hour, than with the old system, and earn more money."

I believe that since those days the phonograph has not been found practical for work of this kind, and that most literary men have been forced to abandon it. Robert Barr at one time used one in the *Idler* office, and Guy

Boothby was reported to dictate all his novels into a phonograph receiver. But amongst the presidents of the Republic of Letters the custom never obtained. The literature so produced was redolent of the contrivance.

I asked Edison about his well-known kindness for newspaper men. He said: "I think the New York reporters are the smartest set of men in creation, and I am fond of them. Almost every Sunday I have a party of them down at my place, and some of them spend all the day with me. I take in two New York papers, and read every word of them."

I may remark that Edison's kindness to newspaper men is so well known in New York that whenever a reporter who is attached to a paper on lineage or space rates is desperately hard up for copy, he goes as a rule to Edison, who is always ready to welcome him and to talk over what he is doing, and so help the journalist to write a column for his paper. This explains why one is constantly reading in the papers that Edison is going to do this or that wonderful thing. Some of the "boys" have been to Orange to see "old man Edison," have had a talk with him, and on their return to their offices have written out an imaginative account of the great scientist's projects, well knowing that, whatever absurdities they may put into his mouth, Edison is much too kind-hearted a man to contradict them. As a matter of fact, and such was my experience of him, Edison does not like to give information about ideas. It is at such times that his fits of deafness come over him, and he will deplore his impossibility to continue the conversation. In him everything is so practical that it seems he cannot talk about what is phantom merely. It is the "what is" that interests him, and not the "what is to be."

I think it would be well if this were generally known,

because Edison's reputation has somewhat suffered over in Europe by the periodical publication in the papers of alleged boasts which he has made of wonderful things that he is going to do. The man is the least self-advertising of scientists; he has never boasted of anything in his life, and if he does not contradict the predictions which are attributed to him, it is because he does not want to get some poor newspaper man into trouble. During the course of that morning I asked him about different projects which had been attributed to him, notably about the far-seeing machine, and of this he said: "I have heard that some European inventors claim to have preceded me in this, but I do not know anything about their inventions. My own machine is getting on very nicely." Then he added very modestly: "I don't think that it will ever be useful for long distances, and it is absurd to say that it will enable one to see things ten thousand miles away. In a city, however, it will be of practical use. I don't look for anything further—at least at present."

The only time when I heard him predict was with reference to his famous ore-extracting machine, but that was in one sense a *fait accompli*. He said: "It is going to be a great thing. Already we have eighty machines at work in the iron mines. It is, however, only as yet adapted for iron ore. I am studying the question of a machine for treating refractory silver ore and gold ore, and shall get them out by-and-by. Then we shall make more money."

Edison talks of money with the respect of a man who recognises its potency as a factor in social and industrial dynamics. Personally he cares nothing for money; personally he has no use for it; his wants are of the fewest. He could live comfortably on ten shillings a week—

indeed, he spends less than that on himself; and if he seems pleased to earn huge sums, it is, firstly, because money proves that his ideas and inventions are popular and successful, and, secondly, because the possession of large wealth enables him to be lavish in experimenting. He is never prevented from testing an idea for the want of the money, and has spent millions in his laboratory on research.

Mrs. Edison had invited the Cavaliere Copello to lunch with her and her husband on the Eiffel Tower, *chez Brébant*; and I was invited, too. Another guest was a strange young man who had written a book on Edison, and who clung to the inventor's coat-tails. It was this young man who afterwards told me that Edison had said that he would send me a phonograph as a present as soon as he got back to Orange. The phonograph never came, but I did not take that as a sign that the promise had never been made. It was a little joke of Edison's to promise phonographs to people, and then to forget all about it. The Americans were hugely delighted when they heard that the Emperor of Germany had reminded Edison, through his Minister at Washington, that he had led him to expect a model of the wonderful machine, and that Edison had answered His Excellency: "Yes, now I come to think of it, I did say something to the young man about sending him one." It seemed such a tribute to American democracy to forget a promise made to an Emperor, and to speak of him as "the young man."

My *déjeuner* with Edison on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower was one of the most pleasant meals it has ever fallen to my lot to share. I sat next to the great man, and we talked together all the time. "When we were on board ship," he said, as we sat down, "they put



rolls and coffee on the table for breakfast. I thought that that was a very poor breakfast for a man to do any work upon. But I suppose that one gets used to it. Still, I would like one American meal for a change—plenty of pie, for a change.” He then smashed his *petit pain* with his fist. There were some shrimps among the *hors d'œuvres*, and he looked at them in a surprised fashion. He had never seen shrimps before. “Do they grow any larger?” he asked me. I suppose that he imagined that they were the young of lobsters. When I told him that they did not grow, he said: “Well, they give a great deal of trouble for very small results.”

We talked of many things. The Tower, of course, came under discussion, and then Edison made the remarks which I quoted to Eiffel. What I did not tell Eiffel was something that Edison said about him personally on another occasion, for I knew Eiffel to be a modest man. What Edison then said was: “I met Monsieur Eiffel at a *soirée* he gave, and I think that he is just the nicest fellow that I have met since I came to France, so simple and modest. He is not looking very well. I daresay that it is his work and all the worries attending it that have worn him out. I was sorry to see him looking so bad, for he is a splendid fellow. He is going to give a lunch in my honour on the very top of the Tower before I go to Germany.”

To return to our *déjeuner*, I asked him what he thought about the system of electrocution which was then being proposed for adoption in New York State—a subject on which I afterwards made a careful inquiry amongst the leading scientists in Paris—when Edison's opinion was supported in a most striking manner. “It is Westinghouse's system,” he said, “that is to be used for this business, and it is being employed very much

against his will. He is indignant that his studies in electrical science should be put to such a use. I, too, as an electrician . . . But, then, I am against executions of any description. Put the men away, and make them work."

Over the *soles frites* somebody asked him if it were true that he had been experimenting in photography in colours. He said: "No, that is not true. That sort of thing is sentimental. I do not go in for sentiment. Carnegie does. Poor Carnegie has turned sentimental, quite sentimental. When I saw him last I wanted to talk to him about his ironworks. That is what interests me—immense factories going day and night, with the roar of the furnaces and the crashing of the hammers; acres and acres of activity—man's fight with the metal. But Carnegie wouldn't talk about it. He said, 'All that is brutal.' He is now interested in, and will only talk about, French art and amateur photography."

Edison's own views on French art he gave me on a subsequent occasion, when I had asked him if the pictures at the exhibition had pleased him.

"Oh, yes," he then said, "they are grand art. I like modern pictures as much as I dislike antique stuff. I think nothing of the pictures in the Louvre. I have no use for the old things; they are wretched old things. Now the pictures in the Exhibition are all as new and modern as they can be; they are good."

As they brought in the *filets Brébant* at the Eiffel Tower *déjeuner*, I asked him, mimicking little Paul Dombey on a famous occasion, "What is electricity, after all?"

Edison said: "It is a mode of motion, a system of vibrations. A certain speed of vibration produces heat; a lower speed, light; still lower, something else."

He was asked whether it was within the range of practical science to construct a machine which could be adapted to the head, and which would record one's thoughts, saving the trouble of speaking or of writing.

Edison reflected. Then he said: "Such a machine is possible! But," he added, "just think if it were to be invented. Every man would flee his neighbour—flee for his life to any shelter."

I asked him what were the true uses of electricity as applied to medicine. He said: "There is a great deal of humbug in all that." Just then the *maitre d'hôtel* was pouring out the cradled Clos Vougeot, serving it with great exaggerations of precaution and almost ludicrous ceremonial. "And," added Edison, who had been watching him with an amused smile on his face, "there is a great deal of humbug about wine, too—and about cigars. Men go by cost. The real connoisseurs are few. At home, for fun, I keep a lot of wretched cigars made up on purpose in elegant wrappers, some with hairs in them, some with cotton-wool plugged into the middle. I give these to the critical smokers—the connoisseurs, as they call themselves—and I tell them that they cost me 35 cents apiece. You should hear them praise them."

I said: "What you say about wines, Mr. Edison, is quite correct. Joseph, Vanderbilt's famous *chef*, told me that the man who pays more than a dollar a bottle for any red wine at even the finest restaurant in Paris is a fool, because you can get the best bottle of claret or of Burgundy for a dollar. When you select higher-priced wines on the list, you are paying for label and dust."

"Is that the Joseph to whom Vanderbilt is said to be paying ten thousand a year?" he asked. When I

had answered in the affirmative, he remarked: "Bright's disease of the kidneys is all the dividend that that man will draw for his investment of capital." Edison, by the way, seems to delight in making use of commercial phrases. It is a treat to hear him pronounce the words "make money." Commerciality with him, as I have explained, is dignified and impressive, vulgar as it is with most men.

Bréban's *déjeuner* was *recherché* in the extreme; but Edison barely touched anything. "A pound of food a day," he told me, "is what I need when I am working, and at present I am not working." And as just then a fresh course was brought in, he took advantage of the open door and slipped out.

A minute or two later I found a pretext for following. I was looking about for him, when a waiter came up to me and said: "Monsieur cherche son père? Voilà le père de monsieur," and pointed to where Edison was leaning over the railing, gazing down at the people hundreds of feet below. He told me that he was calculating the vibration or swaying of the tower. He laughed when I had told him what the waiter had supposed, and asked me what I had answered. I said: "I told him that I was not le Vicomte Edison." "Say, Sherard," said Edison, "don't let them know in New York about that tomfoolery about the count and countess. They would never stop laughing at me in New York." I answered: "I am very sorry, Mr. Edison; you ought to have warned me before. I cabled it to New York from the hotel just one minute after the announcement was made. They know all about it by now."

He laughed very good-humouredly, and said: "Well, I suppose that I shall have to put up with it. They

will be getting pictures out of me represented as an Italian organ-grinder with a crown on my head, and perhaps Gouraud as the monkey. No, I don't blame you. It was a 'beat,' and of course you couldn't miss it. Besides, our Italian friend will have it in every paper in Paris before the night is here."

They had waited in the breakfast-room for Edison's return before serving champagne. After it had been poured out, toasts were proposed and drunk. Edison said to me: "The Cavaliere is profuse, but not so much so as another Italian gentleman who once proposed my health, and who remarked that even the chickens in his country knew my name. It's a regular sanatorium," he observed a moment later, "so much health being ladled out." Again: "All this is new and strange to me," alluding to the ceremonial of our festivities. "If I stay long in this country, I, too, shall soon be able to get up and make speeches and wave my arms about."

When the coffee and cigars came in, his face brightened up. "Mr. Edison is beginning to breakfast now," said Colonel Gouraud.

"Yes," said Edison, taking an Havannah, "my breakfast begins with this." Then, speaking of his habit of smoking, he added, "I don't find smoking harms me in the least. I smoke twenty cigars a day, and the more I work the more I smoke."

I think it was Mrs. Edison who then remarked: "Mr. Edison has an iron constitution, and does everything that is contrary to the laws of health; yet he is never ill."

While we were smoking, the Cavaliere made a furious onslaught on his host, urging him to come to Italy, to be presented to the King, who was most anxious to see him. Science, Art, and Municipality would unite to do



him honour. Edison was very emphatic in his refusal of these honours. He shook his head, and Edison has a way of shaking his head which is a more decided negative than all the circles of the Greek artist. "No," he said, "my nerves won't stand it. I shall just go quietly back to the States from Paris. I shan't go to London, even, that most cheerful of places. I am all topsy-turvy in my head as it is."

When I took leave of my hosts on that occasion, the Cavaliere was still urging his point and Edison was still shaking his head.

I frequently saw him again in Paris, and about a month later, just before he was leaving for Berlin, I had another long talk with him at his hotel. I had found him looking rather pale, and I had remarked upon it. He said: "At first it was my head that worried me in Paris. I was quite dazed; but now the worry is lower down—the effect of all these dinners. Another banquet, or whatever you call it, last night upset me dreadfully. And," he added, with a groan, "I have a whole lot more banquets to attend before I leave for Berlin. I am going there to see my friend Dr. Siemens, and after that I may visit Krupp's works at Essen. They seem very anxious for me to come."

Mr. Gladstone was in Paris at the time, and I asked Edison if he had yet met him. He said: "No, I have only seen him across the road at the window of his apartment in the Bristol Hotel. I see, though, in this morning's *Figaro* that he has expressed a desire to make my acquaintance, and that both he and Mrs. Gladstone had left very pretty messages for me in one of my phonographs at the Exhibition."

As to the Exhibition itself, he was not particularly enthusiastic. He said: "It is a sadly tiring place. The

machinery hall is too big, altogether too big, miles and miles too much of it. I have a headache when I even think of it. I can't say that I've seen a quarter of what is to be seen there, and I don't suppose that I ever will. So far as I have seen, I have not been struck by any novelty on a large scale. There are plenty of improvements in small things, clever little dodges, especially in the milling-screw machines, and many improvements in matters of detail, but nothing new in the way of inventions of whole machines. The French inventors, such as they are, seem to go in for detail."

"Why do you say 'such as they are,' Mr. Edison?"

"Oh, they don't have inventors, in our American sense of the word, in Paris at all. They haven't any professional inventors here, as we have on the other side; that is to say, men who will go into a factory, sit down and solve any problem that may be put before them. That is is a profession which they seem to know nothing about over here. In America we have hundreds of such men. I can't say," he added, speaking of the American Exhibition, "that ours is at all a creditable show. What there is good, but then there is just nothing; it represents nothing. It represents American industry just as much as that cabhorse out there represents the animal kingdom. It is a one-horse concern altogether. I am quite of Chauncey Depew's opinion on the subject. Depew said: 'The American citizen drapes himself in the American flag as he enters the Exhibition by the Trocadero. After he has visited the American section, he takes off that flag and folds it up and puts it into his pocket.' That's just how I feel about it. I must say that the Eiffel Tower is grand, and, after that, what impresses me most is the machinery hall. It impressed me almost painfully on account of its immensity. I think that if they had made everything on a

much smaller scale at the Exhibition, people would have enjoyed it ever so much more."

Since my last visit to the Hôtel du Rhin, Edison's drawing-room bore many outward signs of the popularity which he was enjoying in Paris. Baskets of the rarest flowers, floral offerings to Mrs. Edison, crowded every piece of furniture. A mass of beautiful passion-flowers half hid a model of the phonograph. A box of talking cylinders was almost invisible behind an enormous bouquet from Madame Carnot, choking as it were with Republican fragrance the voices of the numberless princes and potentates which lay bottled up therein. For Edison himself there were photographs of almost every man of note in Paris. There was a portrait of Monsieur Eiffel on the mantelpiece, one of Monsieur Tirard, the Prime Minister, on the sideboard, and one of President Carnot on the sofa. On each photograph was an autograph dedication, couched in most flattering terms.

I asked him how he liked the President.

"Very much," he answered. "Carnot is so simple and modest. He is an engineer, you know, and a very clever one too. He knows all about everything. I fancy that of all the thousands who have visited the Exhibition he is the man who has the best understood and appreciated it. He has been very friendly to me and said many things, flattering things, to me; but he does not say much at any time. As to Prime Minister Tirard, I dined with him the other night, but I did not have any conversation with him. He is a political man, and I know nothing about politics."

"Oh!" I said, "he is a watchmaker, too, and could have told you all about springs and movements and things of that kind."

"Well, I didn't know that. I thought it was all the

political racket that was in his head. I have been well treated here. Indeed, I have been greatly astonished at the cordiality of our reception. We have been treated with princely hospitality—rather too princely indeed for my comfort.”

Before I took my final farewell of Edison, he kindly asked me, in the event of my going to New York, to come and see him at his works. I have often since regretted that during my short stay in America I did not avail myself of this invitation and renew an acquaintance which had given me so much pleasure. But after my experiences at Ellis Island—to undergo which was the purpose of my voyage to the States—I had only one desire, as soon as I had written out my account of the way in which pauper aliens used to be treated in that place of detention—and that was to hurry home to Europe and a kinder world with all the speed that I could compass.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Used to be treated.” I had the good fortune to attract the attention of President Roosevelt to the abominable state of things then prevailing in Ellis Island by the published account of my experiences there. He ordered an immediate inquiry to be made, and, finding that the abuses, as I had described them, existed, in spite of all official repudiations of my veracity, appointed Commissioner Williams to carry out the most drastic reforms.

## CHAPTER XIII

On Electrocutation—Edison's Disapproval prompts a Close Inquiry—Unanimous Condemnation by Leading Scientists—The Executioner's View—Monsieur de Boer, Editor of *L'Electricité*—Monsieur Joubert's Experiments—Monsieur Cornu—"Science has no Place in the Shambles"—The Greatest Physiologist—Doctor d'Arsonval—A Scathing Denunciation—"Impracticable, Illogical, and Uncertain"—Death only Apparent—Electrical Asphyxia a Hideous Torture—Dr. Brown-Séquard's Opinion—Unanimous Accordance of German Scientists—American Indifference—How I missed Fame and Fortune.

**I**N the course of one of my conversations with Thomas Alva Edison, he expressed to me, in his usual emphatic manner, his disapproval, both as a man and as a scientist, of the proposed reform in the matter of capital executions in the State of New York. Since then electrocution has been practised in that State as well as in other American States which have followed its pernicious example, and to humanity is afforded the abominable spectacle of men being put to death by law in a manner uncertain, protracted, and cruel.

In the minds of many people in the Old World the idea obtains that electrocution was only adopted in New York State, not because it kills in a speedy, absolute, and therefore merciful manner, but because certain New Yorkers desired at any cost to posture as in the very van of scientific progress. As, in spite of the continued opposition of true scientists, to say nothing of the humanitarians, electrocution continues to be practised, and seems,



after fifteen years, to have acquired that fixity of tenure by which even the most evil things impose respect, it may be of service in enlightening the public as to the real nature of this abuse to repeat some of the opinions on the subject of execution of criminals by this means which were expressed to me shortly before the barbarous death of the murderer Kemmler. With Edison's remarks on electrocution very fresh in my mind, I was more horrified perhaps than most people by the dreadful prospect of the sufferings which that wretched man was to endure at the hand of his justiciaries, and I determined to consult on the question the leading scientists in France, and to lay their opinions before the people of America.

I did not find one single man of science who was not opposed to the use of electricity for the judicial destruction of life, and to-day, fifteen years after these horrible forebodings were realised, not one of the men whom I consulted has seen any reason to modify the opinions which he then expressed. Those opinions may be summed up in the words that electrocution is cruel and uncertain ; that no current is absolutely fatal ; that death by electricity, although, as in drowning, the patient dies from asphyxia, unlike drowning, is painful. I think that this is a matter of which the public should be reminded.

The first person whom I sought out in the course of this inquiry was Monsieur Deibler, the public executioner. I was determined to let no personal considerations stand in the way of making the case against this new form of torture as clear as possible, and it was as well that people should be forced to face the fact that this reform was one in which Schinderhannes took as keen an interest as any notoriety-seeking dabbler in the

sciences. Monsieur Deibler, who interrupted a game of *la manille* in his favourite *café* on the Boulevard Voltaire to talk to me, reminded me with some pride that he had "assisted at over three hundred executions," and then went on to give his opinion. It was that the New York Legislature was making a great mistake, "Une bourde, m'sieu, une vraie bourde, ce qu'on appelle une bourde," and that the Americans would find by experience that the new system would not work satisfactorily. He added that no means of execution can beat the guillotine, which he considered a perfectly painless form of death. He said that the real punishment of the condemned man comes when the news of his approaching end is announced to him, and that afterwards he falls into such a state of terror that he is really unconscious of all that ensues from the time he leaves his cell to the moment when the knife falls. Monsieur Deibler hoped to live to see the day when all nations, following the lead of France in this as in all other matters, would adopt the guillotine.

Monsieur de Boer, the editor of the technical journal *L'Electricité*, then the principal organ of electrical science in France, said: "My personal objections to electrocution are based more on sentimental grounds. I consider electricity too beautiful a thing to be used in work of that kind. But, of course, that is an objection which would not weigh a feather weight with such practical people as the Americans. I may tell you that the subject is creating great interest in technical circles in Paris, and that we are all awaiting the result with great scientific curiosity. What will be Kemmler's manner of death? We have frequently talked about the matter in this office, and I have not heard one man express himself in favour of the innovation. Monsieur Joubert, one of the greatest of French electricians, who

was in here a few days ago, said that in three cases out of five in which he had experimented upon animals with the lethal apparatus—an apparatus similar, as far as he could judge, to the one that is in readiness for Kemmler's execution—the current had to be delivered twice before the desired effect was produced. What was a matter of little importance where rabbits were the victims becomes naturally of very serious importance indeed where the life of a human being is in question. We understand over here that in America it was considered that death inflicted by electricity would be much less painful than death on the gallows. I am not at all certain of the correctness of that opinion. I imagine that the passage of the current through the body of the condemned man will produce hellish torture. It is contended, I am aware, that death will be so rapid that the victim will feel nothing; but this argument is urged by people who ignore the truth that to the man in the expectation of death time is infinitely longer than under ordinary circumstances. One second to the man under the knife of the guillotine is a long period of suffering—a fact which is known to every physiologist who has studied the question. It is, therefore, nonsense to say that death by electrocution will be as quick as it is painless."

Both the Monsieur Joubert referred to above and Monsieur Maxime Cornu, one of the most distinguished professors of the Collège de France, spoke emphatically in favour of the old methods. Monsieur Cornu said: "I have a very great admiration for the inventiveness and the spirit of progress of the Americans. I fully appreciate the immense services that they have rendered to science in the domain of electricity, for example; but I cannot congratulate them on this last departure. Science has no place in the shambles. If the death penalty has

to be inflicted at all, the old methods are decidedly preferable. I have not heard a single one of my confrères express a contrary opinion. We look upon this experiment as a costly farce. I am aware that some people contend that it is being done from a merciful feeling, that electrocution has been invented expressly to accelerate the death of the condemned man ; but surely the gallows, the guillotine, and the garrotte effect their purpose admirably. After all, the death-penalty is intended as a punishment, and I ask why should its penalty be diminished when at the same time a great danger is incurred that the condemned man may be unnecessarily tortured? I confess that I have not looked into the matter as closely as I might have done, but the convictions which I have expressed are very strong ones with me, and nothing that I have read on the subject has induced me to alter them one jot."

The opinion, however, to which I even then attached most importance, was that of Doctor d'Arsonval, of the Collège de France, who to-day ranks as one of the foremost physiologists and electrical scientists in the world. In 1890 he was still *préparateur* to Doctor Brown-Séquard, and this fact may have detracted a little from the value of the most emphatic declaration which he then made to me on this important question. For at that time Brown-Séquard had excited considerable ridicule in the scientific world by the failure of the serum of perpetual youth which he imagined himself to have discovered. He had announced to the world that in his laboratory he had been able to compose a fluid which, when injected into the feeblest and least virile of old men, would produce upon them all the happy effects that in the Middle Ages were attributed to the waters of the Fountain of Jouvence.



It can be readily imagined that here was a topic which lent itself to the purposes of the prurient wit of the boulevards. The laboratory in the Rue Claude-Bernard, where great things had been done, and where under d'Arsonval still greater things were to be done, was at that time, to some extent, under the ban of public opinion. Otherwise, I cannot see how after such a pronouncement as the one I am about to quote, from a scientist of d'Arsonval's standing, the purpose of the American experimenters could have survived a single hour. "I am entirely opposed to the plan of executing human beings by electricity," he said. "I consider it impracticable, illogical, and above all uncertain. This is also the opinion of every one of my confrères with whom I have spoken on the subject. I do not deny that death can be produced by means of these appliances, but not definitely in every case. Electricity applied to the human body produces death either by direct action (that is, by the disruptive effect of the discharge in the nerve tissues) or by reflex or indirect action on the nerve centres. The effects are greatly varied, and have been fully explained by my friend and master, Doctor Brown-Séguard, under the names of inhibition and dynamogenics. This simple distinction, which is established by a most careful study of the facts, has a practical value in this respect, that in the first case insensibility is fatal and definite, while in the second case, as my experiments have shown me, the patient can be brought back to life. The only cases in which I have been able to produce death irrevocably have been where I have laid bare the spinal cord and have applied the current directly to the naked mass. Of course, it will not be practicable for the executioner to do that, and it would be infinitely simpler for him just to thrust the knife into the



spinal cord. That would have exactly the same effect as the electric current, namely, it would disorganise the nervous tissues so completely as to cause death."

"But," I said, "you have produced death?"

"Yes," said Doctor d'Arsonval gloomily, "if you like to call it so."

"How 'if you like to call it so'?"

"Death is only apparent in these cases. In every instance it was within my power to bring the victim back to life by practising artificial respiration upon the body. Suppose that I have electrocuted two big dogs. I leave one alone and begin to practise artificial respiration on the other. In a few minutes the latter regains consciousness, and soon is as well as if he had been saved from drowning. The former dies from exactly the same cause which kills the drowning man—that is to say, from asphyxiation. I have thus killed and brought back to life again the same dog ten times running. At the end of the experiments he was just as well as before I commenced them. One might make this sentimental objection to execution by electricity, that it will be terrible for the executioner, and those who back him up in his horrid work, to know that after the body has been removed from the lethal chair, they can, if they choose, recall their victim back to life. I cannot determine exactly how long it takes before the asphyxiation does its work and the victim finally succumbs, but I believe that it is a very long while in many cases. I base this theory on the fact that persons who have been a long while under water can be restored to life by the means I have mentioned. For my part, I have always applied the restorative treatment immediately, and, as I say, I have never once failed in bringing the animal back to life and health."

“Is it absolutely certain,” I asked, “that death by electricity is caused by asphyxiation?”

“The remedies which cure asphyxiation restore life to the man who accidentally, or the animal who purposely, has been submitted to the electric shock, and when I have dissected the bodies either of animals or of men who have succumbed to this shock, administered by any known dynamos, I have been unable to find any traces other than those which are left by asphyxiation. Thus the heart is always found to be in a state of complete contraction. Of a disorganisation of the nerve tissues there is little or no vestige.”

“But just now you said that in one or two cases, by using certain machines, you had been able to produce absolute dissolution?”

“That was when I was fortunate enough to apply the current so that its effect was produced directly on the bulb or brain centre—a circumstance which occurs so irregularly that it can be described as of anything but certain effect. The practical objection against the proposed plan is this: So much apparatus is needed for such a purpose, a steam-engine, a battery, an electrician, besides the hangman, and I do not know what else besides. It is much too complicated. The guillotine attains the same result so much more simply. Here in France we think that it is morbid curiosity that prompted the Americans to take this resolution.”

I remarked as to the uncertainty of death that surely lightning killed instantaneously.

“Yes,” said Doctor d’Arsonval, “so it does; but there is no battery made by the hands of man which has the force of lightning. A shock like that is, of course, enough to disrupt all the centres and to produce death. But there is no battery yet constructed, and I might

almost say constructable, which is able to produce any such effect."

I told the doctor that many of the physiologists with whom I had conversed on the subject had expressed the opinion that death by electricity is very painful.

"Do not call it death by electricity," he said. "You should call it death from asphyxia caused by electric shock. Then I am of their opinion. I imagine that no more hideous death than this can be inflicted, and I will tell you why. Electrical asphyxia, as I may call it, does not resemble death by any other kind of asphyxia. In almost every case of asphyxiation, other than by electric asphyxia, consciousness is entirely suspended, and the victim glides insensibly from life to death. Electrical asphyxia resembles far more the asphyxia caused by the poison curare with which the Indians used to tip their arrows. This poison produces in its victim complete immobility. Every motive power in his body is paralysed. He cannot breathe; he cannot move a muscle. But he retains his consciousness to the end. He sees, he hears, he feels, he knows everything that is going on around him. There is no greater mistake than to imagine that the absence of movement in electrified people denotes a loss of feeling.

"I have experimented with curare on dogs, and have found the effects to be identical in every respect to those produced by asphyxia from electrical shock. Here also I have been able to restore the victim to life by practising artificial respiration. I have thus experimented ten times running on the same dog. As I say, the effects are exactly the same, and in both cases death is produced by asphyxiation. In the one case—namely, that of poisoning by curare—we know for a fact that consciousness is not suspended, and this allows us to

fear that in the case of electrical asphyxia the same phenomenon is produced. Is it not terrible to think that, when the condemned man is removed from the lethal chair, he may be as fully conscious of what is going on around him as any man present in the execution chamber? I, for my part, believe that he will be so, unless by rare good luck the executioner has been able to determine the right spot on the man's head against which to direct the current—namely, that which corresponds exactly with the bulb. This, of course, differs on every head.

“And is it not more terrible to think that this fearful torture of death in life may be prolonged for many hours? The victim will see the preparations being made for his own *post-mortem*! No, I am most decidedly opposed to this innovation. I consider it neither practical nor humane, and, above all, it is uncertain. That is the opinion of us all. Only a day or two ago Doctor Brown-Séguard said: ‘It is scandalous that an unknown agent should be used for such a purpose.’ The responsibility of the men who passed that Bill and the responsibility of the men who will carry out its provisions is indeed a terrible one.”

In Germany the unanimous opinions of all the leading scientists was in full accordance with that expressed in France. Our protest, however, was without avail. Kemmler's martyrdom followed closely on the broadcast publication in America of d'Arsonval's terrible indictment of the new method; and who has forgotten, even after fifteen years, the sickening details of his prolonged torture and agonising death?

The leading Americans themselves, whom I used to meet in Paris—men of standing in many fields: politicians, Senators, and Congressmen, ex-Secretaries of

State, Ministers on their way to their embassies, prominent editors, princes of finance, the most famous men and women of letters—seemed, when I asked them for a disavowal of the abominable system which disgraced the State of New York, to consider that people who got so low down in the world as to be eligible for the electric chair were people about whom it was really a waste of time to trouble one's head.

In a commercial country the man who has failed and is bankrupt ceases to be a man of any account whatever ; and what more deplorable schedule of bankruptcy can a wretched man file than one in which he cannot even set down a right to existence as an asset ? It was impressed upon me in some cases that the people who spoke to me had no sympathy to waste on persons of such very small social importance. In other cases I found that never a thought had been given to the matter, and "That so?" was all the comment that was elicited when I repeated what d'Arsonval had told me of the horrors of the electric chair.

I must not omit to mention, as an illustration of the ethics of the new journalism, that when I told the editor of the paper in which I printed the protest of the French scientists, that d'Arsonval had offered to electrocute me and restore me to life, thus pledging his reputation on the truth of his theory that death was only apparent, and consciousness was fully retained during asphyxia by electric shock, and giving me a splendid opportunity of proving my case against the system which we were denouncing, the editor said : "Well, and why didn't you tell him to go ahead ? That would have made a good story for the paper. It would have been a scoop, and it would have been suitably remunerated."



## CHAPTER XIV

Ernest Renan—On Future Punishment—The Genesis of the Idea—Its Development—The Belief of the Romans—The Inferno of the Buddhists—Ernest Renan as a Man—His Home in the Collège de France—A Man of Many Books—His Opinion on the Naturalists—Renan and Daudet.

ONE of the distinguished Americans to whom I repeated what Monsieur d'Arsonval had said about the tortures which a man under electrocution must endure, remarked in an offhand way that as a convicted murderer was bound in all justice to go to hell, these tortures would be a sort of preparation for him, "a kind of letting him down gradually."

It is because the subject of electrocution has reminded me of this that I am led to think also of a long and interesting conversation which I once had—it was in 1892—with Monsieur Ernest Renan about that place of future torment which we know by the name of Hell. Renan denied that we have any Old Testament authority whatsoever for believing in the existence of such a place. I remember that on calling on him that day in his rooms at the Collège de France, I said to him: "Master, I have come to talk to you about hell. You are being much criticised in England for your writings and your unbelief. In no country is the *odium theologicum* so strong as in England, and it has been poured forth upon you."

He smiled and raised his shoulders, and smiled again ; then deprecatingly stretching forth plump, beautiful white hands, he said :

“ We must blame nobody for absurdity of religious beliefs. There are things in religion which are infantine in their absurdity. But tradition, atavism, education, aye, and patriotism, will make even enlightened men accept—where religious belief is concerned—things at which in everyday life they would be the first to smile. That explains why men who are justly reputed to be master-minds are really true believers. It is not hypocrisy on their parts ; they are sincere. Family traditions, atavism, and patriotism create their faiths.”

“ Since when have people held this dreadful creed of future punishment—this belief in hell ? ” I asked.

“ Since about one hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ. The Jews of the Old Testament had no belief in a future state ; at least, you will find no allusion whatever to either the future punishment of the evil or the future beatitude of the good in the Old Testament. The reason of this was, no doubt, that up to the period which I mention the Jews were fairly happy. But in 175 B.C. Epiphanes Antiochus came and persecuted the Jews terribly. Then they suffered horrors of gibbet and sword, of torture and fire, and many of them were martyred. It was then that the belief arose that those who had suffered martyrdom should in after-life be compensated for their terrible sufferings, whilst to the executioners and torturers, the valets of Epiphanes, future punishment should be dealt out. The hankering after a *quid pro quo* is a primary factor in the Judaic psychology. Each man, they thought, must get his fair share of good and of evil. Those that suffered on earth should have compensation

in a future state, while those who were happy here and made others suffer should in their turn have to undergo pain hereafter. It may thus be said that it was between the years 175 and 163, that is to say, some time during the reign of Epiphanes Antiochus, otherwise Antiochus IV., that the world saw the genesis of that terrible idea of future punishment which has terrorised the civilised world ever since."

"Had not heaven, the idea of heaven," I asked, "its genesis simultaneously—that grand idea of future happiness which has kept the poor and oppressed so patient and submissive ever since?"

"Yes, simultaneously that idea arose. Future suffering for the torturers, Antiochus and his crew; and for the tortured, the persecuted and martyred Jews, future happiness. A squaring of accounts."

"Eternal beatitude for these; for those, eternal pain."

"Not a bit of it. The Jews could not conceive eternal life in any form for a finite being. Eternity, in their belief, was alone the prerogative of Almighty God, the Eternal Being. Opinions varied as to the duration of the beatitude which should be enjoyed by those who had suffered on earth. Some thought that it would last four hundred years; others maintained it would be for a thousand years. None hoped for eternal beatitude."

"Then in this respect also," I said, "humanity, an inch being granted to it, has ended by taking an infinity of ells?"

"As humanity will do under all circumstances. How far are the hopes of the believer of to-day from the hopes of the Jew of one hundred and fifty years before Christ, who only looked for seven lifetimes of

happiness! Appetite has come to us while eating. None to-day would be satisfied with the prospect of a thousand years of beatitude. All expect to be happy for ever and ever. In the nine hundred and ninety-ninth year all would revolt, raise barricades in Paradise, and insist on a renewal *à perpétuité* of the awarded felicities."

"But," I remarked, "the promises and the menaces of the Lord Jesus?"

Renan bowed his head. Then he said :

"They were a continuation—a development of the ideas current among the Maccabeans, the genesis of which I have exposed to you. The formulæ given in the Gospels are an extension of similar formulæ to be found in such works as *The Book of Enoch* and *The Assumption of Moses*. Christ's menaces were a considerable development."

"Why do you say that, *maitre*?"

"Because the original idea of punishment was less a state of suffering than one of complete annihilation. The wicked man was to be crushed out, while the good man was to enjoy from four hundred to a thousand years of felicity. At the same time the idea of annihilation was not generally accepted. Many people liked the idea that others would be in a state of suffering in the after-life, so that their own state of felicity might be, as it were, increased by the contrast. It was to make a contrast possible, for the sake of a comparison."

"Was it held that this state of suffering should be eternal?"

"I have already said that the Jews, from whom the Christians have inherited their beliefs, could not conceive an eternity for men, believing that state to be alone the prerogative of the Almighty."

“And whence arose the idea that there would be burning in hell—fire in hell?”

“It was thought that the pain of burning was the most atrocious pain that could be endured by the body, and so it was applied to the soul. I have said that in matters of religion none should be astonished at the utmost childishness of belief. But the germ idea of this form of punishment may be found in the sacred Book of Isaiah, which is not contained in the Bible, and which was written during the time of the Captivity. And the fire and the worm of the later belief were doubtless inspired by recollections of the worship of Moloch, before whom children were sacrificed in burning braziers. The Valley of Gehenna, near Jerusalem, a sort of Montfaucon, where corpses were left to rot—a *pourrissoir*—and where fires burned to clear the pestiferous air, did also suggest the idea of a terrible place of punishment, a place where

Vermis eorum non moritur et ignis non extinguitur.”

“Why,” I asked, “was hell supposed to be below the surface of the earth? Surely to the ignorant the region of fire is where the lightning is?”

“It had to be placed somewhere. Above, in the bright azure of the beautiful skies, was naturally the place of beatitude. Nor was the presence of subterranean fire unknown, for the volcanoes were proof of its existence. For contrast, also, heaven above, and hell, consequently, below.”

“But did not the Romans entertain any idea of a place of punishment after death?”

“Not the cultured, not the intelligent. The ignorant possibly may have done so. To the cultured the stories of Ixion, Tantalus, and the other sufferers appeared as they



do to us—creations of poetical minds. Amongst the cultured, at the most, existed indifference and doubt. What does Tacitus say? ‘Si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguntur magnae animae.’ ‘If, as it pleases the learned to say.’ . . . Is not that an immense shrug of the shoulders? Such was the general attitude amongst Romans who thought. The vulgar very possibly believed in Styx and Tartarus and the tortures that the poets spoke about.”

“But amongst other peoples?”

“Yes, there were the Buddhists.”

“Ah, yes! they looked forward to an ultimate Nirvana.”

“No, only the cultured Buddhists did that. But the ignorant, the vulgar, the general had an idea of a place of future punishment of which we know many pictorial representations to have survived. These pictures, frescoes mostly, show us that the vulgar, uncultured Buddhists believed in a place of future punishment which very closely resembled the Inferno described by Dante. You remember the lines:

Quivi sospiri, pianti ed alti guai  
Risonavan per l'aer senza stelle,  
Perch'io al cominciar ne lagrimai.  
Diverse lingue, orribili favelle,  
Parole di dolore, accenti d'ira,  
Voci alte, e fioche e suon di man con elle.”

“Where did Dante get his ideas of Inferno from?”  
I asked.

“They were the current ideas of his time—the ideas of hell which were current in the thirteenth century, as is shown by the numerous paintings which existed contemporaneously with Dante in the churches in Italy. And now let me say that almost as long as humanity

has existed there has been entertained the hope that the wicked—that is, the man who made one suffer—would eventually be served out. Man has ever considered himself a beast of burden, on whose back the wicked rains down blows with a cudgel. He has always hoped that, if he never should be able to serve the wielder of the cudgel out, yet somehow or somewhere the latter should suffer in his turn. ‘Un jour viendra qui tout paiera’ is the expression of a hope which is almost coeval with mankind.”

“And about purgatory?”

“Traces of the idea of a middle place can be found in the writings of early Christianity. But it was in the Middle Ages that the belief in purgatory became general. An *espèce de moyen terme* was wanted. It was found useful to have a place for those who had sinned moderately, a place of expiation for peccadilloes, a place for those who could not be damned outright. But it was chiefly to the rapacity of the Church that the invention of purgatory may be ascribed. It was a speculation on the part of the priests—an excellent speculation, I may add; for no invention of human ingenuity has brought in more money than this. You see, a soul in purgatory could be released by so many masses at so much a mass. Gold poured into the coffers of the Church—legacies, indulgences, all the tricks.

“It is all so simple and all so obvious,” he added, “and yet people appear to be very angry with me, and assail me with letters. Not that these letters are usually controversial. No, they need no answer; they merely make statements. I cannot tell you how many letters I have received of late in which was the simple assertion, ‘There is a heaven’ (*Il y a un Paradis*), heavily underlined.”

Ernest Renan was, of course, no believer in the divinity of Christ ; but he loved Him and followed His laws naturally, without any hope of a reward hereafter. He was one of the truest Christians that I have ever met ; but, as a matter of fact, it has been my general experience in life that the best and worthiest disciples of Christ are more often to be found among those who do not see in Christianity more than a philosophical system.

Ernest Renan was the simplest of men. From his universal reputation and the great success of his books he derived no vainglorious emotions. The praise of the humblest gratified him as a tribute of which he was unworthy. I remember telling him on the first occasion on which we met that his *Vie de Jésus* had long been with me a *livre de chevet*. He really was pleased at this meagre tribute from me. "You are very kind ; you are very kind, sir," he kept repeating, and he looked gratified, and he put his beautiful little white hand on mine as he talked. I have known authors, very far removed from his celebrity, who have appeared to resent any praise of their books, giving one the impression that they held that no words could adequately convey a description of the merits of the works.

Renan had the Christian regard for the humble, for the little children of the Scriptures. He respected poverty ; indeed, he lived and died poor himself, although he might have been a very rich man. An offer was made to him of 1,000,000 francs if he would give a certain complexion to the history of the Jews not warranted by historical fact. He naturally refused the bribe, and in other ways, too, he showed his contempt for money and possession. When he died he was so poor that the nation had to pension his widow.

I was a frequent visitor at his home. He lived on

the second floor of the *École de France*. His apartment looked out on the quadrangle in front and on some gardens at the back. It was much like the rooms of a married don at Oxford. I often thought of Charles Reade's rooms at Magdalen in comparison. The place was full of books. The small ante-chamber was furnished with bookcases. I remember one day, when he had accompanied me to the door, and we were standing in this room, our conversation turned back to books. We had referred some time previously to the *homo unius libri*, and Renan had described this, a "foolish epigram, a paradoxical *mot d'esprit*." I remarked to him as we looked at the long lines of books on the walls of the entrance-room, "Well, you, *maitre*, at least are not a man of one book. Here is the Bible, and here is the *History of the Jews*. Then here is a Guizot, and here is Mahaffy's *Rambles in Greece*, and here the *Greek Customs*, and here Haweis's *Thoughts for the Times*."

He said, "I am a man of many books. I don't think that the scholar can be surrounded by too many books."

I once heard him answer that very foolish question which is often put to bookish men, "If you were only to be allowed one book, which book would you choose?" I heard a very distinguished man once answer to this question, "The Book of Job," and when he was asked why, he said: "To learn patience when worried with foolish questions." Renan was much too gentle to say such a thing. He answered that it was difficult to reply to such a question. "I think, however," he said, "that I should choose the Holy Bible, which in every sense is the Book of books. I have heard of those who, in answer to your question, have answered that they would prefer Homer. It is a matter of predilection; but even

considered as poetry, and apart from all other points of interest, I think the Bible still the Book of books. And, of course, as the historian of the Jews, the Old Testament, which is their first history, is indispensable to me."

Once Renan was launched on a subject, he could go on for a long time. The mention of Homer led him to discuss the question of the authorship of the Homeric epics. He declared himself, on this question, one of the Separatists. "It is," he said, "for me a collection of ballads, the work of many men, not of one man." This brought him to touch on the Bacon-Shakespeare discussion, which was then at its height, owing to the alleged discoveries of Ignatius Donnelly, and on this he said: "I have heard of the controversy, but I can hardly venture an opinion, as I have not studied the question. But," he added, "I am well acquainted with the works of Bacon, and have a profound admiration for his scholarship and his style."

There was something old-fashioned and provincial, and at the same time intensely homelike, about Renan's apartment in the Collège de France, which delighted me so that I always enjoyed the hours that I spent there. His drawing-room might have been the parlour of a remote château in the Vendée two centuries gone by. The tapestries were at least that age, and the portraits which hung on the walls were certainly of the period of Louis XIV. in his dotage. Some of the furniture in the dining-room reminded one of a Breton farmhouse. There were used those quaint old salt-cellars of Breton crockery which female figurines hold up with outstretched arms. There were always flowers in profusion, "the luxury of the poor," as Renan used to say.



His study was beyond the dining-room, and there it was that I first met him and where afterwards I most frequently stayed with him. He was always untidily dressed, and his hair was ever ruffled. I have never seen Renan, even at official ceremonies, with his hair tidy. In the house he used to wear slippers, and glided about noiselessly. And this was by no means the only point in him that was feline. He literally purred when he talked; or rather, I should say, his voice, which was most pleasant to listen to, was low and had that purring caress which seems to be acquired by Churchmen from long practice of whispered confidences in boudoir and confessional. And he was sleek and plump, and had the whitest hands. I used to compare him in my mind to some courtier abbé of the days of rapier and peruke, some priest at the Palais Royal under Mazarin: he had the manners, the *malicieux* look in the eyes, the intelligence writ across his face.

On the very first time that I saw him his bright-faced little Breton *bonne* took me right into his study—a rare privilege, I afterwards understood. I found him writing at a table on which an oil-lamp shed its subdued light. He was busy correcting some proofs of a history of the fourteenth century. He seemed literally walled in with books. The very steps of the library ladder were covered with books and pamphlets. The floor was littered with volumes. There was not a chair unoccupied. The walls were covered, devoured with books. Only room had been left for one or two gloomy mediæval portraits in time-tarnished frames. On the mantelpiece to the left of Renan's table was a terra-cotta bust of him by Victor le Clere, which was of extraordinary resemblance. He was always pale. I remember that that evening, as he turned his face towards me

under the lamp, I was struck with its pallor. It was a white presence in a room of shadows. I thought that he looked like a white monk. But if his face had monastic pallor, his form showed no monastic asceticism, for here was the plump and comfortable presence of the courtier abbé who dines well and lies in warm beddings.

He often used to complain of the difficulties which he encountered in writing his *History of the Jews*. "The documents are so rare," he used to say. Yet he always told me how he enjoyed the work, how deeply interested he was in the Jewish people. One day he said to me, "There is a heavy cloud over a long period of their history, and it is with reason that the first centuries of our era have been called the dark ages."

I believe, however, that it was these very difficulties which fascinated Renan in writing his *History of the Jews*. I once heard him say that he wished he had time for a task which would have been even harder. "I should like," he told me, "if time permitted me, to write the history of the Greeks after the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire. It is a subject of very great interest. But what a colossal undertaking! What researches it would involve! For on no point of history is documentary evidence more rare."

I only once saw Renan show signs of impatience. A red-haired Englishman who stuttered, and who was, I believe, a baronet, asked him what he thought of the theory that the English are descended from the lost tribes of Israel. He came very near to shrugging his shoulders. "It is," he said, "perhaps a theory which is unworthy of investigation."

On one occasion he almost rebuked me. I had been speaking of the Naturalists, and he cried out: "Nay, monsieur, you must not speak to me about the

Naturalists. I think nothing about them. That it is low, far away, out of sight, beneath. It is the mud. It is a pity for French literature. I have a horror for what is coarse. At Pompeii all that was coarse was secreted and hidden away. It is a pity that we do not do the same in these days. I confess that I cannot understand how the French, so lettered, so scholarly, and so full of taste, can tolerate such horrors as are the modern novels." Nor would he ever allow me to talk to him of Guy de Maupassant.

I remember being at Renan's house one afternoon in July, 1888, when Daudet's *L'Immortel* was being discussed. A young publisher who was present told us that in spite of the fact that almost everybody had read the tale in feuilleton in *L'Illustration*, twenty thousand copies had been sold in two days. Hereupon Renan said: "I don't see how a novel about the Academy can have public interest. The Academy has become one of the commonplaces of conversation. One talks about it in society just as one talks about the weather—for something to say. As to these intrigues, about which Daudet's book, I hear, tells so much, they simply don't exist. But why should one contradict their existence if the belief in them amuses some part of the public? Oh, monsieur, let us never do anything to diminish the gaiety of nations! Perhaps it is true that the merits of the various candidates are not always weighed as they should be. But it is not the rôle of the Academy to classify talents. The title of Academician is less a literary than a social honour."

I mentioned to Renan that a few days previously I had driven to the Institute with Ferdinand de Lesseps. "Exactly," said Renan. "There is a case in point of a man who was elected to the Academy not for his

literary merits—has de Lesseps ever written anything?—but because he was a distinguished gentleman whom we wished to honour and whom we were proud to number in our company. It was my privilege to address him at his reception. I hope that Alphonse Daudet had no wish to hurt anybody's feelings in the Academy, because if he had he has failed completely in his purpose. His book is being completely ignored amongst us."

He added after a while: "I am sorry to hear that Daudet has made use of one or two very realistic expressions in this new book of his. I am told that the great word of Zola and the Naturalists is there in all letters. It is a pity, because Daudet has refinement and style, and he should not stoop to such things."

I repeated this to Daudet some time later, and I do not know whether Renan's criticism affected him or not. I only know that in subsequent editions of *L'Immortel* the offending passage did not appear.

## CHAPTER XV

Louise Michel—My First Sight of Her—A Gathering of Anarchists—The Police Spies—Ferry and Aubertin—A Stolen Interview—Louise Michel's Appearance—Her Noble Character—My last Meeting with Her—Why She Refused Her Blessing—A Socialist at the Elysée—The Dress-Coat and the Scent—Jules Jouy.

IT was one Sunday evening in December, 1887, that, after leaving Ernest Renan's rooms at the Collège de France, I first came to know a woman who, although she was a professed Atheist, was indeed a true Christian. I speak of the Red Virgin, Louise Michel, ex-Communarde and *pétroleuse*, whose big heart melted for the sufferings of the poor.

After leaving the Rue des Écoles, I was crossing the Boulevard St. Michel, when I caught sight of a small red poster, affixed to one of the trees, announcing a meeting of Social Democrats at a certain well-known tavern in the Rue Montagne-Ste-Geneviève at eight o'clock that night. The presence of Louise Michel was assured, and all citizens, especially all students, were invited. The entrance fee was to be threepence. In those days one still took the Social Democrats *au sérieux* as a party, and as for me I was anxious to meet Louise, of whom I had heard much from Henri Rochefort. I may say at once that I never heard anything bad about Louise. At the worst she was spoken of as half-witted. I suppose to many such entire unselfishness as marked this poor



woman's conduct all through her miserable life must have appeared a kind of insanity.

At eight o'clock I entered the tavern in the Rue Montagne-Ste-Geneviève, one of the oldest and most disreputable streets of the Maubert Quarter. It was one of those mediæval taverns with its front painted a vivid red and the passers-by in the street protected from the roysterers inside it by stout iron bars over all its windows. In those days, as I have said, we took the Social Democrats as in earnest; we believed in the sincerity of the anarchists, and I really felt it rather courageous on my part to march through the bar-room, where a number of disreputable people were drinking, into the assembly room behind. As a matter of fact, I suppose that that place was one of the safest spots in Paris. Everybody was spying on the actions and words of everybody else, on the chance of seeing or hearing something which might be reported at the police headquarters and of earning eighteenpence. Years afterwards, when I got to know people at police headquarters and once asked to see my own *dossier*, I duly found it recorded that I had attended the meeting at the Rue Ste-Geneviève on that night, and that I had shaken hands with Louise. Every foreign correspondent who resides in Paris, by the way, has his *dossier* at the Prefecture.

The meeting-room was a hall of moderate size, evidently constructed for dancing purposes, with a gallery on one side and a platform on the other. On the platform was a cracked piano, on which a *citoyenne* was playing the Marseillaise. The walls were decorated with grotesque frescoes illustrating the pleasures of the dance, and at one end was a smoke-begrimed bust of the Republic, wearing a Phrygian cap of red worsted on her head and surmounted by two red flags. A little

girl, the daughter of Citizen Bois-Cervoise, an ardent Social Democrat in those days, who since, for all that I know, may have become a sub-prefect, was moving about the room collecting for the miners of the Anzin district, who were then, as they chronically are, on strike and starving. The meeting was composed of a large number of students and of people whom in my innocence in those days I took for earnest citizens of a Revolutionary tendency.

There was no sitting accommodation; one stood about on tables or benches. Just then there was some excitement in Paris because a half-witted youth named Aubertin had shot at Jules Ferry. The orator who was addressing the meeting in the Rue Montagne-Ste-Geneviève—a *citoyen* in a blouse who spoke very violently, and made frantic play with his hands, as is the wont of Socialist orators all the world over—expressed his strong approval of Aubertin's conduct, and regretted that he did not succeed in "making the affair" of the Tonkinois, which was Ferry's nickname. He hoped that there were plenty of men ready to follow in Aubertin's footsteps.

A young man, elegantly dressed, who looked like a student, but who may have been an agent provocateur, made loud objections to this advice. He was at once surrounded by angry citizens, who for some time past had been fuming at the sight of his top-hat, and violently hustled out of the room. I might have given the meeting some valuable information on the subject of the attack on Ferry. (A day or two previously I had been to Ferry's apartment. He lived on the fourth floor of some house in the Champs-Élysées Quarter, and affected at least Republican simplicity. I had been anxious to know whether he had been really wounded, whether

Aubertin was a genuine assassin, or, as one fancied, a mere tool of the police, and whether, as Rochefort had suggested, the pistol had indeed been loaded, not with slugs, but with a slug. There was quite a procession of us going up the stairs, and I happened to be walking just behind Bourgeois, who is Minister again to-day, and may very possibly be President of the Republic next year. I spoke to him and he spoke to me, and we agreed that things were coming to a dreadful pass in France.

In this way, being in earnest conversation with an ex-Minister, I passed the footman at Ferry's door without being challenged, and, following close upon Léon Bourgeois's heels, walked straight into the presence of Jules Ferry, who was parading up and down his drawing-room haranguing an audience of female relatives. We had been given to understand that he was dangerously wounded, and was lying in bed with fever. He was very indignant with me when he had ascertained who I was, and, as I left the room, I saw him expostulating with Bourgeois. He seemed to think that it was the latter who had brought me in. Rochefort was highly amused when that evening I told him that I had seen the Tonkinois under the circumstances which I have described; but he said, "Take care you don't get yourself shot one of these days." At that time it was usual in France to revile Jules Ferry; but I think that since then people have come to see that he was one of the few Republican Ministers who had a policy, and that he was most abominably treated in his lifetime.

Bois-Cervoise followed the citizen in the blouse, and gave us a *réchauffée* of one of Rochefort's articles. Whilst he was talking we heard a commotion at the back. "It's she." "No, it's not." "Yes, I tell you, *c'est elle*."

Through the open door I saw out in the street a broken-down old cart or van drawn by a white horse. The floor of this van was littered with straw, and on this were placed three chairs. This one recognised as the usual equipage of the *citoyenne* Louise Michel when "doing political turns" at the assembly rooms; and, yes, there she was, making her way with sidling gait through the crowd which opened for her to pass. It was the first time that I had seen her. She appeared to me a little, insignificant woman, ugly of face as it is possible for an old woman to be, tanned of skin like a Beauce peasant, with knotted fingers and dressed in rags. She did not show in any respect in her outward appearance that she had noble blood in her veins. As a matter of fact—and this is not generally known—Louise Michel's mother was *femme-de-chambre* in a country house, which used to be visited by the best families in the district. Louise was the daughter of a very distinguished nobleman, who came on visits there. In her life, if not in her appearance, she showed her blood. In London once I heard the poor exiled woman spoken of with enthusiasm by one of her neighbours as "a thorough gentleman; that's what she is, this 'ere Louise," and that is exactly what she was. I was much impressed by the welcome that the crowd in that meeting-room gave her; they treated her with the reverence shown to a queen. I saw one woman stoop and catch up the muddy and tattered hem of Louise's robe and press it to her lips. Every man uncovered as she passed; some bowed. One old man wept with emotion and embraced the *citoyenne*. The poor are very full of love and reverence for those who really try to help them.

Louise climbed on to the platform and said, "I have only two minutes to spare." But that is what she

always used to say. "I have to go from here to Montmartre, where I am expected to speak." In those days she had a fine loud voice and was of facile eloquence. Nor did she, save when worked up, use the violent language which one was accustomed to hear amongst her fellow politicians. She had a dreamy way of talking in abrupt sentences, not unlike the phrases of Bart Kennedy, with long and absent-minded pauses between, such as Charles Matthews affects when addressing the jury. She had no action of the hands, but kept them usually folded behind her back, pathetically like a schoolgirl saying her lessons.

I am afraid that our poor Louise spoke arrant nonsense that evening. There was considerable noise and disturbance in the room, for Victor Lisbonne, the Communard, had arrived, and was relating his experiences; but Louise's voice dominated all the uproar. She made violent accusations—there was nothing easier at the time—against Grévy and Wilson, and said that they were but two ordinary specimens of the bourgeoisie whose one object in life was to grind down the poor and "exploit" them. "You call this a change, but it is only Carnot instead of Grévy. The system remains the same; you are still all sheep being led to the slaughter." She then referred to the Chicago anarchists, and expressed her sympathies. "It is the same everywhere," she cried, "and everywhere the Republic is a gigantic word for laughter."

She then turned to a subject which was her favourite one, and which she used to drag in whenever she spoke. "There are rumours of war afloat," she said, "and it is possible that in a few weeks France will have some other nation by the hair. Thousands of you will then be sent out to be butchered—and for whom? For these very



bourgeois who in peace grind you down, starve you, work you to the bone, rob you. Things will never be as they should be until each conscript throws down his arms and refuses to fight for a Republic which is the worst of tyrants."

It was the ordinary speech, but it was most enthusiastically received, and as the draggled woman slid off the platform the whole street rang with cries of "Vive Louise!" "Vive Louise Michel!" As she was passing out to the door, I stopped her and talked to her, and we shook hands. I certainly did not think that a subject of sufficient importance to be reported the same evening to police headquarters, and as a taxpayer myself I trust that, at any rate, not more than the minimum of two francs was paid to the spy for this piece of information.

I saw Louise again, sixteen years afterwards, and for the last time. It was shortly before her death. That she was obviously dying then served to heighten my indignation against the political Barnums who for the sake of notoriety and gain dragged this poor old woman from town to town to mumble nonsense on public platforms. It was an abominable thing to make of poor Louise a spectacle. When she was announced to speak at the theatre of Vernon in the winter of 1903, I determined to go and make my public protest there, and I found that a number of my fellow-citizens were of my way of thinking. A young buck-anarchist, who was, I think, the impresario of the pitiful show, referred to our protests as those of an organised opposition.

In the theatre café during an *entr'acte* in this tragical comedy I introduced myself to him as the "organised opposition." Poor Louise was sitting there, and I reminded her of her first meeting, and, strange to say, she well remembered that night in 1887 and her discourse

in the Rue Montagne-Ste-Geneviève. She was miserably clad for a woman who suffered from the chest. On her head she had one of those cheap straw hats which are sold for a few pence in the London shops. Her boots gaped at the toes. It was midwinter. They were taking her all over France to coin her notoriety into money. All that was expected of her was to come upon the stage and show herself. She tried to speak—that night at Vernon she had tried to speak—but her voice had left her and her thoughts were all astray. Of the old manner there remained only her pathetic attitude as of a schoolgirl saying her lessons. She looked, as I sat next to her in that café at Vernon, so old, so ugly, so forlorn, so wretched, and withal had such a look of kindness in her weary eyes and saddest smile, that before leaving her I said, "Louise, give me thy blessing," for she really seemed to me to be an angel. She shook her head and said, "*Mais non, mon garçon*, there is nothing in that. You must not believe in things like that. They don't exist." She died an Atheist, as she had lived, and withal one of the truest followers of Christ that I have ever met.

Maxime Lisbonne, the professional anarchist, was in great form at Louise's meeting that night in the Rue Montagne-Ste-Geneviève. On arriving there he was violently attacked by some fellow-members of the Socialistic Club, Les Egaux, because he had been present at one of President Carnot's receptions at the Elysée. "The gilded halls of the rich bourgeoisie are not for the members of Les Egaux," was what was said to him. I heard the fat ex-Communard's explanation. "Citizens," he said, "I have been to see the President of the Republic, and I can assure you that he receives people very well. Why did I go? Well, I'll tell you, because I had

a dress-coat. Where did I get a dress-coat from? Well, it was part of my old acting wardrobe. I used to wear it when playing in *Thirty Years; or, A Gambler's Life*. I found it the other day. It was very much spotted, and so I had to clean it with benzine. It smelled very strongly of this, and I heard one swell remark at the buffet that it was just like a revolutionary to scent himself with petroleum."

Lisbonne managed to make the members of his club laugh, and followed up his advantage by offering to lend the dress-coat to each of them in turn, so as to enable them to taste the Elysée champagne.

Maxime Lisbonne was the professional Communeur who opened that famous tavern, "Le Bagne," where the waiters were dressed as convicts and the rooms were decorated like prison wards. It was one of the first of the many artistic brasseries, so called, which had for some years so much success in Paris. He was always suspected of being *au mieux* with the police, but that is a reputation which is enjoyed by every one of the Parisian anarchist party posing as such.

Very shortly after my introduction to Louise Michel, I was at the Intransigent office one day, when Rochefort showed me a bullet which had been fired at her at Havre, where she had been speaking. Rochefort pointed out to me that a cross had been cut on the bullet, and that, he said, showed that the man Lucas, the would-be murderer, was sane enough when he tried to kill the poor woman. "It's an old superstition in Brittany," he said, "that if this precaution be not taken, the shot will recoil on the murderer." He told me that Louise had been badly wounded, but that she refused to charge the assassin.

I had asked Jules Jouy to dine with me that night—

Jules Jouy of the Chat Noir ; but we were so anxious about Louise Michel that he insisted on our going to visit her before we sat down to dinner. So we drove out together to Levallois-Perret, where she lived. She occupied two miserable rooms on the fifth floor of a house in the Rue Victor Hugo, which were filled with cats and dogs and birds. She seemed to have there a big menagerie of strayed animals. I could not get her to tell me anything about her wound. She said that it was nothing—"Ce n'est rien"—though we could see that she was ill and that she had lost much blood.

Jouy, who was a political writer on *Le Cri du Peuple*, besides being a writer of songs, told her that in her state she ought not to have come on to Paris ; she ought to have remained at Havre.

"Eh bien," said Louise, laughing, "that would have been a fine thing to do! And what about my animals who were locked up here? Who would have attended to them?"

Poor Jouy! Although he has now been dead many years, he is still remembered in Paris, and his songs are still sung. In the horrible, the *genre macabre*, he has had no rival. His "Gamahut, écoutez-moi donc," supposed to be addressed to the murderer Gamahut by the executioner, moves the most callous ; but it is perhaps his satirical song about the Paris *sergents-de-ville* that is the best-remembered of Jouy's works :

Quand les sergents s'en vont par deux,  
C'est qu'ils ont à causer entre eux.

He was the most popular of the Chat Noir *chansonniers*, and earned handsome fees as a society entertainer. I have frequently seen him *dans le monde*, and he often used to draw me aside and whisper to me the amount of



the *cachet* that he was to receive. He confided in me once that he was saving all his money in order to buy a small farm in the country, and he showed me the plans of the house. He expected to be able to retire in about ten years. But he realised too strongly the deep emotions that he used to depict, and that, together with the irregular life and the late hours made a victim of poor Jules Jouy. He went like Maupassant, at an earlier age.

The last time I saw him was at a double execution. We had met the night before at the house of Monsieur Thors, the President of the Banque Hollandaise, where he had been helping to entertain the guests, and towards midnight he told me that he had heard that the next morning the three murderers, Sellier, Allorto, and Mécrant, were to be guillotined. He insisted on my accompanying him; he said that a triple execution was not a sight to be missed. It was in vain that I told him that I had already seen a triple execution, at which one of the sufferers was a woman. He would have me go, and so we went off in evening dress to the dismal Place de la Roquette.

I think Jouy must have been disappointed that night, for President Carnot had reprieved one of the murderers—the worst of the batch, by the way; and it was also at this execution that was first abolished the horrible custom of making the guiltier accomplice look on at the execution of the other. Such as it was, however, the spectacle was powerful enough to cause two strong men to faint. One was one of the soldiers on duty; the other was young Isabey, the son of the painter. He was standing just behind me, and I helped to carry him out of the crowd. I was much impressed by the sight, and, on reaching home, I wrote my impressions in the following terms:



“I think that executions should not be public. On Saturday morning, as day dawned on the Place de la Roquette, I saw between the uprights of the guillotine the face of a little girl watching the scene from the attic window of a neighbouring house. Later on all the windows in this house were occupied, mostly by women and children. There were at least a thousand of us in the inner circle, and there were many thousands outside. These sang all through the night. We, for our part, were boisterous and flippant. I was within twenty feet of the guillotine, and but two feet from the passage down which the condemned men passed.

“The violet lividness of Allorto, the yellow hideousness of Sellier, and the heart-rending essaying of each to grin and look brave, in spite of trembling limbs, were what I wish never to have seen and will not presently forget. I cannot say that of either butchery I saw more than the preliminary scuffle in the case of each. I had my eyes closed, and wish that I might have been deaf also, for the sound of the crash of the knife is now at all times in my ears. Every detail that one took in throughout that long and sinister vigil was repulsive beyond description: the general indifference, the current pleasantries, the abjectness of Him of Paris as complacently he rubs and rubs his hands, the briskness of his *valetaille*, the horses tossing their nose-bags, the humble besom propped against the van (which might have been a respectable besom and swept a vestry), the yawning basket, and the horn lanterns here and there. As for the guillotine, it is a pretty and by no means a sinister object.

“I loved the two priests who were with them at the last. One was young, tall, and fair, and had the presence of a saint; the other was short and comfortable, and

it was he who suffered most ; and when he had kissed his poor son on either cheek, and for the last time had raised his crucifix aloft, he broke down and cried like a little child. Those who, *quand même*, attack the Church and are *esprits forts*, should watch her ministers on such occasions.

“ I will not speak of the after-scenes, when the guillotine was down and away, and the outer rabble was let in, and came tearing down like yelping hyænas to where it had been, and sought and sought for the smallest fleck of blood. I try only to remember the pallor of the sanctified and noble youth and the tears of the old man. They were what alone is human in the terrible night that I have passed.”

For a great variety of purposes—so it occurred to me that night—humanity can be roughly divided up into two classes, those who turn yellowish green under extreme terror and those who go purple. It is the latter who are the best companions.

Both Jouy and I were much amused, when day broke, to notice in the very forefront of the spectators on the other side of the guillotine a ragged negro, who wore a comical white hat and who was barefooted—amused because the police investigations as to one’s right to pass into the enclosure had been particularly rigorous that night. The sons of Ham are in their way quite as ubiquitous, that is to say they have quite as much the capacity for pushing themselves in everywhere, as the sons of Sem.

Jouy seemed to enjoy the horrible sight. Morbidity was in great demand in Paris in those days, and he could draw inspiration for successful songs and monologues on the Place de la Roquette. I felt as disgusted as I always have done when I have been present at the

legal slaying of human beings. On that occasion two things occurred to render the experience particularly revolting to me. The first of these was that just before they flung Allorto on to the plank, his eyes, wandering round the crowd in wild supplication, caught mine. I felt as if a knife had been driven into my face, as helplessly, hopelessly I had to turn my head away, impotent to answer that terrible appeal.

Later on, as the guillotine was being taken down and the place cleaned, I was standing with Jouy by the side of a water-plug in the pavement, when a man in a blue blouse, with characteristic stains on it, laid his hand on my arm, asking me to move out of the way. I noticed that the hand was maculated, and I next noticed that the man was carrying a bucket in which there was a sponge. I gave a shout of indignation: "*Canaille*, how dare you touch me!" Jouy pulled me away, and told me that I ran a considerable risk. Outrages to a hangman's valet would be most severely punished by the court.

I was out of France when poor Louise died, or else I would have hurried to her bedside to pay a last tribute to a poor woman who, to my thinking at least, had much in her both of martyr and saint. They were mostly unbelievers with her when she passed away; but they said of her that she died like an angel, and that her face after death had the repose of a sleeping child. Well, she would feel, as she was drawing her last breath, that, as far as her poor strength had allowed of, she had done all that she could to help the wretched. She had risked her life in their cause; in their cause she had forfeited her liberty; she had sacrificed for them everything that a woman holds dear; she had hungered and had walked ragged that others might have their needs. "Si ut sapientibus . . ." there should be a crown of

glory for Louise Michel. William Blake would come to meet her like a sister in the Elysian fields.

The death-bed of an old woman which I do not like to remember is one that I visited not long after I was with Jouy for the last time. This was the garret in the Rue Lepelletier, where Cora Pearl lay. Cora had been a very notorious woman in years gone by, and towards the end of the Empire and in the early days of the Republic she had amazed the world with her luxury and extravagance. I used to see her in her entire decadence, and it pained an English heart to see a countrywoman of his so degraded. One understands what is meant by the feeling of national honour who sees his countrywomen trafficking in their shame abroad.

Cora Pearl was so poor when she died that it was to the *concierge's* charity that her bier owed the two tapers which burned by her bedside as she lay in state in that garret-room, a spectacle for moralists. There were no flowers brought to be laid upon her coffin. In the old days, one gala night in midwinter, a Russian Grand Duke had carpeted the floor of her vast apartment with violets, purchased at their weight in banknotes.

I cannot say that Cora's face can have afforded much satisfaction to the moralists. It was well preserved, and her expression was one of contentment rather than of remorse or distress. Indeed, one notices this cynical and mute exultation on most faces of dead sinners. One need but stroll into the Morgue to convince oneself that death would seem to the majority of people to bring relief and rest. It is true that Cora died amidst *bourgeois* surroundings such as would appeal to her middle-class instincts. She was more favoured by fate than the old *lionne* of Louis Philippe's days, who quite recently was arrested in the Bois de Vincennes, a Phryne



to the rag-pickers ; or that splendid courtesan of the Third Empire who died in a garret much as Gervaise died in her hole under the staircase.

This woman was destitute of everything. Her only possession was a trunk which was filled with letters from her former admirers. All her love-letters, extending over the entire period of her imperial days, were there. Here were the *billets-doux* of the greatest men in the State—the very greatest was abundantly represented. She used to sit on the box—for she had no other furniture—and read her letters by the light which came through a hole in the roof. When they found her dead, she was lying with her head on her treasure-box. Had she cared to traffic in these letters, there was at least a comfortable living assured. The blackmailers of Paris would have given thousands of pounds for these documents. The Royal autographs would have been held priceless by collectors. But to this *grande amoureuse* the thought never came to separate herself from what were the proofs of the triumphs of her beauty. These letters were more to her than food or clothes or a decent shelter. “ Ronsard m’aimoit lorsque j’étais belle.”

I am afraid that Cora made money of every scrap of compromising writing that remained in her possession after her *déchéance*. Of worldly goods she left no more, as the *concierge* in the Rue Lepelletier told me, than one could wrap up in a pocket-handkerchief. They included a portrait of Queen Victoria and a family Bible. She had based hopes on the proceeds of her *Memoirs*, which were published some years before her death ; but the police had spoiled this venture from a financial point of view. They had warned her that no extortion might be practised in connection with her souvenirs, and had threatened, in case she gave any trouble, to expel her



the country, as they had done after young Duval, of the Bouillons Duval, attempted suicide, and suggested an incident, to be made use of in *Nana*, to Zola. And Cora knew that if she returned to England she would have the choice there between starvation and the workhouse. In Paris some glamour still clung to her name, and there were amongst the more foolish of the *jeunesse dorée* a certain number who were proud to be seen giving an arm to a woman for whose favours kings at one time had striven, or, what answered Cora's purpose just as well, were supposed to have striven.

The *concierge* of the house where she died made quite a good thing by showing the body to the curious, and the general remark was that it was surprising that a woman with such ugly features could ever have inspired such passions as had been attributed to the admirers of Cora Pearl. The fact is, that beyond a great abundance of rutilant hair, and a skin of exquisite whiteness and delicacy, Cora Pearl was in no sense of the word a pretty woman. But it appears that she was wonderfully made. It was after her bust was exhibited at the Salon—so she tells us in her *Memoirs*—that her physique became the talk of Paris. She is still spoken of amongst sculptors as the most divinely formed of women; and there is possibly some satisfaction in the fact that in a city where the popular idea is that Englishwomen are always by Nature most grudgingly endowed, the daughter of an English stable-lad had plastic charms that maddened a generation of foreign princes and potentates.

## CHAPTER XVI

The Captains and the Kings—As Subjects for Journalism—"Carnot at the Elysée"—A Geographical Hotel—Dom Francis and his Dogs—"Envoyez Schneider"—Dom Pedro of Brazil—A Night Out with a King—Alexander of Servia—Leopold of Belgium—Oscar of Sweden—Macmahon in the Lock-up—Carnot and the Kangaroo—Adrien Marie—Queen Victoria's Kindness—Prince Dhuleep Singh—The Duchesse d'Uzès—General Boulanger.

PRINCES and potentates! The concluding words of the last chapter remind me that it is usual in writing memoirs to give prominence of description to such intercourse as the writer may have had with the rulers of men. If I have digressed from the path traced for me by so many distinguished predecessors, it is not, let me hasten to affirm, from a democratic and knavish disesteem of the captains and the kings, but because I have always attached very much more importance to those who have done great things than to those who merely are great by pomp of circumstance. I will add that personally I cannot detect much interest in those narratives of conversations in which, of the two interlocutors, the one whose words one cares little to hear is voluble and diffuse, whilst the other, whose remarks might really be informing, is stertorous and monosyllabic. I protest that I find little entertainment in reading of the things that Mr. X—— or Mr. Y—— said to the King of ——; and kings being what they are, and tongue-tied as they are, we know that we shall look in vain for topics

of interest in the remarks made by them to Mr. X—— or Mr. Y——.

I am supposing Mr. X—— or Mr. Y—— to be faithful chroniclers who avoid embellishment and practise no deception, and not of that too common type of gazetteer who, knowing that the kings will not condescend to repudiate any words which he may attribute to them, allows his clumsy fancy to play for his own glorification and the bamboozlement of his readers. And it is astonishing with what a small expenditure of imaginative forces the writer who describes fictitious personal relationships with kings and princes can command a public. I have at present in my mind at least three publicists of both sexes whose names are very well known, and who earn almost their entire income by inventing stories about members of ruling dynasties whose acquaintance and even friendship they allege they enjoy. A few back numbers of the *Almanach de Gotha*, a red book or two, and a shameless capacity for telling untruths are their entire stock-in-trade.

In America the valuelessness of an "interview" with a royal personage is recognised by editors and correspondents alike. Even were the interview genuine, no rival editor would believe it to be so, and consequently all the charm of having secured a "beat" over—that is to say, of having beaten—a competitor is wanting. This being so, entire freedom is given to the European correspondent to invent interviews between himself, as correspondent of such-and-such a paper, and the monarchs or rulers of the country in which his journalistic operations may be carried on. Indeed, it is tacitly understood that he shall "fake" such interviews whenever necessary. I remember an American correspondent who lived in Paris who professed to have a keen sense of honour and of truth,

and to object to barefaced lying. The editors of the paper which he represented were very fond of ordering him to interview the President of the Republic on all kinds of absurd questions. It was, of course, quite impossible for him to obtain audience of the President under any circumstances, and even had an audience been granted as an exceptional favour, nothing like an “interview” would have been tolerated. My friend had a strong objection to barefaced “faking,” and in the following manner was able to comply with the absurd requests of his employers without sacrificing his principles.

“Sometimes, towards the evening,” he told me, explaining his difficulties and his method of getting out of them, “I’ll get a cable from New York, saying, Cleveland’s been seen walking arm-in-arm with a buck-nigger, and I’m to find out what Carnot thinks of the situation. They expect me to go to the Elysée and knock up the President and just have a friendly chat. And in that paper they have to get what they expect, or you get fired. Of course, I could just sit down and write off the cable out of my head, but that don’t suit my principles. I carry on my newspaper work on the George Washington system, and don’t tell more lies than can be helped. So I have routed out a *marchand de vins* fellow called Carnot, who lives out Boulevard Voltaire way, and when I get one of these damn-fool cables from the news-editor, why, I just take a cab and drive to old Carnot’s gin mill, on the Boulevard Voltaire, by way of the Elysée Montmartre, set up drinks on old Carnot’s zinc counter, and ask him what he thinks about Cleveland’s walking arm-in-arm with buck-niggers, or whatever confounded nonsense they want to know about. My Carnot’s got just as sensible a head as any other Carnot going, and his remarks are as well worth repeating. I can then go home and write out

that the — correspondent, having called at the Elysée, saw Carnot, and asked him his opinion on the question, and that Carnot said . . . and so on. And I can file that cable with an easy conscience, and defy any man to call it or, which is more important, to prove it a fake. The editor, no doubt, has his own views on the genuineness of the stuff; but as he does not pay anything extra for a high-life interview, I suppose he is not particular as to its authenticity."

Of course, the bulk of the American reading public does not attach much importance to kings and rulers; does not know who or what they are, and would consider the awe with which the European regards this class as a convincing and final proof of the degeneracy of the Old World. This means that an "interview" with a king or an emperor would not appear to them a feature of any exceptional interest in their morning paper. I remember that in a leader in the *New York World* the editorial comment made upon an account which I had sent from Berlin in 1887 of a visit paid by Czar Alexander to old Emperor William was: "Philosophical people over here who read of this tomfoolery will not regret that they live in a Republic where even the visit of a President would not be regarded as a very great event if it did not 'bring trade to town.'" In England, however, the attitude of the public is different. Our worship for the royalties is so pronounced that we delight in the mere narrative of their doings, and it is amongst English readers that the imaginative chroniclers to whom I refer above find their easiest dupes. During the twenty years of my life in Paris I was brought as much as any other publicist of standing into the august atmosphere which surrounds the thrones, but I will not pretend that what I there saw and what I there heard were things of such paramount



importance as to warrant me in giving any special prominence to them in my pages.

As to this august atmosphere, I often think of my visits to a certain hotel in Paris, which, because it was largely, indeed almost exclusively, patronised by royalties, was a house to which many of the richest Americans schemed to gain admission. For it was not a hotel to which any man might drive up and engage rooms. One had to be known to the proprietor, and one's record had to be an unexceptional one. One newspaper proprietor had to pass a long probationary period after his first visit to Paris before he was allowed to register at this exclusive house. Mere wealth was by no means a passport to these exalted regions. My business frequently took me there; and whilst my card was being taken up to the person whom I had come to see, it used to delight me, from a certain place in the hall which adjoined the servants' staircase, and whose advantages of situation I had discovered by accident, to listen to the conversations of the lackeys and other servants. I used to call the house the "geographical hotel," and indeed one heard little else but the names of countries, principalities, dukedoms, and counties. Portugal, one might hear, was clamouring for his *café-au-lait*, and would Thurn and Taxis have his buttered toast now or when he could get it? Scandinavia had rung his bell at least a dozen times, and the question was, did the Baltic Provinces imagine that the legs of French chambermaids were made of cast-iron or of flesh and blood?

Hard by this hotel was an English bar where the gentlemen of the geographical personages referred to used to assemble of an evening, and it was amusing indeed to listen to their conversations from a gallery which overlooked the drinking-saloon. Here, indeed,

might one learn that to his valet no man, even the greatest, is a hero. Over the clinking glasses the *chronique scandaleuse* of courts was engendered, and perhaps here were first set afloat the evil rumours that assail the loftiest thrones. I remember telling Edmond de Goncourt one evening of this place and of the things that one curious might overhear, and he said that there was no doubt that it was in the drinking-shops of Versailles that first took flight the horrid lies that, waxing ever stronger, smothered at last under their noisome wings the fair fame of Marie Antoinette.

No finer passage exists in French prose than the lines which Edmond and Jules de Goncourt wrote upon the gradual growth of calumny in that masterpiece of their joint literary labours, the monograph on Marie Antoinette, and I have no doubt that when they penned those words the authors had conceived some such scene as that which I then described to the surviving brother. I know that Edmond de Goncourt was keenly interested, and made me twice describe what I had seen and heard, once to illustrate something that he had been saying to Daudet, and again as I was driving towards Passy with him.

In 1883 I used to live in the Rue Lesueur, exactly opposite the house occupied by the consort of Queen Isabella, Dom Francis, whose main occupation in life it was to take his dogs out for walks in the Bois de Boulogne. There was a story current that each of these dogs was named after some former rival; but I do not believe this, for more than once I saw Queen Isabella greeting her husband from her carriage as she drove past him in the Avenue du Bois, and watched him bow in return. There was certainly a great show of courtesy maintained between the two spouses. Dom Francis's

dogs were particularly poodlish poodles, the curled, beribboned, pampered pets which so excite the ire of an English terrier, and it was one day by rescuing one of his ex-Majesty's dogs from the jaws of a one-eyed, cock-eared, bull-pup from a stable in the Avenue de la Grande Armée, that I was admitted to the distinguished honour of conversation with the ex-King.

We talked mainly about dogs, and I was surprised at the royal ignorance on the subject. He seemed to be very much better informed on the topic of the history of Hortense Schneider, whose former *hôtel* adjoined his more modest abode. However, there was one anecdote connected with her career which he did not know, and which, when I told it to him, made him laugh.

One day that Napoleon III. found his solitude down at the palace at Biarritz intolerable—the Empress and her ladies being away—he telegraphed to Paris to the Court official who attended to that sort of thing for him, “Envoyez Schneider.” He made elaborate preparations for the reception of the bright Grand-Duchess of Gerolstein. A dainty *petit souper* was laid out in the most private of the private apartments. The amorous monarch expected the arrival of the charming actress with pleasing emotions. When, however, “Schneider” arrived, and was shown into the scented boudoir, it was no ravishing Hortense that beamed upon the sight of the eager Emperor. By mistake the procurer in Paris had sent to Biarritz Schneider the Minister, a fat, fussy, and intolerable little man, who was the Emperor's special bugbear at Cabinet Councils.

Dom Francis seemed to have very bigoted ideas on the divine rights of kings. I believe that considerable tomfoolery of ceremonial was observed in his small house. His servants had the “charges” of a Royal

Court assigned to them. It was said that a *femme-de-ménage*, or charwoman, the Mrs. Kidgerbury of the Rue Lesueur, once she passed the threshold of his house, became a Lady of the Bedchamber, and I will not assert that the English stable lad who looked after His Majesty's poodles was not dignified with some such name as Master of the Royal Kennels. Dom Francis had all the little ways and manners of kings. He used to give his hand as though expecting the *bacia-mãos*; and when he had nothing more to say to one, used to step back in the approved fashion by which kings signify one's dismissal. He was a great contrast to another Spanish monarch, Dom Pedro, of Brazil, whom I saw several times after his expulsion from his empire. Monsieur de Lesseps had introduced me to him in the kindest terms.

He was in very poor health on his arrival in France. Indeed, it was said that the revolutionaries had waited till his disease had quite broken down his strength and courage before coming to extremities. He was the quietest and most simple of men, and he seemed very pleased to think that as soon as he recovered his health he should be able to attend the meetings of the Academy of Sciences, of which he was a corresponding member. He told me he looked forward to being able to read a great number of books, which "as a monarch" he never had had the time to do. He asked me many questions about Lesseps, and he shook hands with me each time that I took leave of him. He was as democratic an emperor as one could imagine, and I do not think that that was because he had been dethroned and ranked himself an Emperor no longer. He frequently expressed the opinion that Brazil would tire of the Republican form of Government and revert to monarchy. Until his death he believed that he would be recalled. The last

occasion on which I saw him was just as he was leaving for Vichy, and as I bade him farewell I expressed the hope I might next have the honour of saluting him in Rio Janeiro—"Sur le trône, sire," I said, and the ex-monarch smiled, for at that moment he was sitting on a Saratoga trunk, in the disorder of his departure.

One evening, while dining at Sylvain's, I got into conversation with a swarthy, middle-aged gentleman, whom from his manner and volubility of talking I took to be a Southern Frenchman. We seemed to be interested in the same topics, and as we finished dining at the same time we left the restaurant together. It was the stranger who suggested we should take a stroll, and in his company I walked down the boulevards and the Rue Royale into the Place de la Concorde. There we crossed the bridge, and continued down the Boulevard St. Germain till we reached the Boulevard St. Michel. We went up this boulevard and entered Bullier's. Here at the door the stranger was requested to give up his walking stick, and as he refused to do so, he was not allowed to enter. I noticed that there was a crest and an inscription on the handle of the stick. He left me and went off in a cab.

Some students who had recognised him told me that my companion was Milan of Servia, and it then occurred to me that his face was quite familiar to me. He had told me many interesting things during our long walk, and had shown himself, as subsequent events demonstrated, a clever prophet in matters political. I am afraid that I have no recollection whatever of the things which he said, but they were all duly recorded in an article which I wrote for my paper, *The New York Journal*. It was entitled, "A Night Out With a King," and hugely diverted New York. Mr. Albert Pulitzer, the proprietor



of the paper in those days, told me this himself, congratulated me on the "story," and as an afterthought asked, "By the way, was it true?"

The first conversation that Queen Nathalie granted to any one for purposes of publication after her separation from her husband was given to me. I had the honour of waiting upon the Queen in a house on the Avenue du Bois. I remember that the interview was a very sad one, and that I felt very depressed as I drove away. Under the circumstances I ought to have been exultant, and my dejection consequently shows that the lady's attitude and manner had profoundly enlisted my sympathies. For, as far as I remember, she did not tell me anything of a very distressing nature. I only know that I wrote to America that I had seen a heart-broken woman.

I often used to see her son, young Alexander, while he was a schoolboy in Paris, and one night saw him sitting outside the Café Américain drinking what looked like absinthe and smoking cigarettes. He was in the costume of lycéen, and looked a big, overgrown schoolboy. Presently two greatly excited men came rushing up, and an animated conversation ensued between them and the young monarch. It appeared that the young King had been taken to the Opera, but had managed to slip out during the performance, and, determined "on seeing life," had hastened round to the Café Américain to enjoy himself in the way I have described. He said that he was tired to death of ceremonial and fussing, and absolutely refused to return to the Opera until his two guardians had joined him in a final drink. It was to some extent the unfortunate tastes which led him to the Café Américain that night that gave the regicides a pretext for the abominable crime to which the poor

youth fell a victim. I will not record what had been the subject of his remarks to me until he was discovered.

A king who is never wanting in the collection of the people who write about their royal acquaintances is Leopold of Belgium, the most amiable and hospitable of monarchs. During the season at Ostend, when he walks on the front, it requires but very little manœuvring on the part of a person of English or American appearance to get into conversation with the old gentleman and to enjoy a crack with a king. The only tacit stipulation is that he is not to be recognised as the King. He will continue to chat until "Your Majesty" or "Sire" is introduced. Then he precipitately retreats. He likes to talk—or in former days used to like to talk—about the Channel service between Ostend and Dover. He was the creator of the line, and is largely interested in it. He used to be delighted to hear it praised. On one occasion at Ostend I referred, in conversation with the old gentleman, whom I had met on the front, to Jean Volders, the Socialist leader, and the old gentleman said, "He's King of Belgium." It is certain that at that time poor Volders had very great influence in the country. I saw him, with a stroke of the pen, in the office of *Le Peuple* in Brussels, put a stop to the general strike which had already caused bloodshed and which threatened a revolution.

Leopold is particularly amiable to journalists, and has all the belief of the modern business-man in the value of advertising. When Stanhope, of the *New York Herald*, was on his way back from Hamburg after testing, in his own person, the efficacy of the anti-cholera vaccination, King Leopold asked him to dinner. He seems recently to have accorded his confidence to an Irish journalist named John de Courcy Macdonnell, whom I knew in a dreadful plight in Dieppe a year or two ago, and who has

of late stepped forward as the champion of the Belgian administration of the Congo.

Belgium is a very democratic country, though perhaps not so much as Norway or Sweden. I remember one day, as I was riding in the tram from Middlekerke to Ostend, we saw two ladies by the roadside signalling to the conductor to stop. The regulation is that the trams only stop at certain fixed spots, and these ladies were not near any such point. The conductor was preparing to pull the cord, when a commercial traveller who was in the car cried out that he had no right to stop the car, that the car was due at Ostend at such an hour, and that he would only just have time to catch his train to Brussels. "But, *malheureux!*" cried a friar who was amongst the passengers, "don't you recognise those ladies? Don't you see that they are the Queen and the Princess Clémentine?" "I wink my eye at the Queen, and still more so at the Princess Clémentine," said this very democratic commercial gentleman. "Regulations are regulations, and the cars are not to stop except at fixed places. It is neither the Princess Clémentine nor the Queen who will pay me for my time and expenses if I miss the Brussels train through their fault." I need hardly say that, in spite of his remonstrances, the car was stopped and the ladies were taken up. The commercial man grumbled loudly all the way to Ostend, and there could be no doubt that the two princesses knew what he was grumbling about. For my own part I do not like to see queens and princesses of the blood royal riding in tramcars. I think that as soon as royalty becomes democratic its *raison d'être* ceases. The king ought not to mingle with the man in the street. I remember that when I first went to Christiania I was told that I should easily recognise the King walking about in

the town, as he was the only man in the capital who wore a top-hat, except Ibsen.

King Oscar of Sweden, as he must now be styled, is of monarchs the most accessible, as he is one of the most gracious. Each week at the Palace in Stockholm he holds a reception which is open to all—his subjects and foreigners alike. Nor is it difficult for anyone who presents himself in the name of literature or science to be admitted to private audience. He also has a kindness for journalists. I remember that during my first visit to Stockholm, being desirous of writing an essay on the Queen of Sweden, and finding it impossible to obtain any truthful particulars about her in a city where she is not popular, I wrote in desperation to the King direct, as the person most likely to be able to give me information about the good lady. In Germany such an application might have involved me in a prosecution for *Majestaets-Beleidigung*. In other countries, except perhaps Belgium, no notice would have been taken of it. In Stockholm the result was pleasing and swift. I had posted my letter to the King in the morning; that evening, on entering my hotel, the porter called after me, "There's a letter here for you." I expected no correspondence, so I asked, "Who's it from?" "Oh, it's from the King, I think," said the porter in the most matter-of-fact tone. "I wonder what he wants now" is, I suppose, what I ought to have said, with the air of a man who is importuned. I did not. I was too pleased, and I opened the King's missive eagerly. It was a kind letter, referring me to Chamberlain von Celsing, who, so ran the communication, had been instructed to put himself at my disposal, and to give me all the information I required. When on a subsequent visit to Sweden I had the honour of speaking to the King, and told him how grateful I had

been for his kindness on that occasion, he said, "Ne faut-il pas s'entr'aider entre hommes de lettres?" I said, "On s'entre-tue plutôt," and he laughed. I heard afterwards that he had been much pleased with the essay I wrote on his literary work.

The first place where I spent some time in the company of Marshal Macmahon, ex-President of the French Republic, was in the police lock-up in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. He was brought in by the arm just two minutes after my own arrest, and on exactly the same charge of "refusing to circulate." It was in the days of Boulanger; there had been a disturbance at the Chamber, and a mild street riot had broken out on the Place de la Concorde. On such occasions it is the tactics of the Paris police to seize in periodical rushes upon as many of the general public as can be grabbed and hauled off to the station, leaving it to the Commissary of Police to select those whom he will detain, "to recognise his own." I happened to be in one of these hauls, and was waiting at the lock-up, in the company of a number of other rioters as little riotous as myself, when, loudly protesting and greatly offended in his dignity, the old Marshal was marched in with a policeman holding each arm. The brigadier immediately recognised him (his subordinates, of course, had failed to do so), and sprang to attention after giving the military salute.

It appeared that the Marshal had not moved on fast enough when ordered to do so, and on being spoken to again had answered in an obstreperous and rebellious fashion. The brigadier poured forth torrents of abuse on the unlucky *agents-de-ville* who had arrested the ex-President, "Monsieur le Maréchal," "Monseigneur le Duc de Magenta," and so on; and the old gentleman failed to show that magnanimity which the truly great are



supposed to display on such occasions. He bestowed no *largesse* upon his captors ; he did not request the brigadier to refrain from abusing the humble subordinates, who had but done their duty and had shown themselves no respecters of persons. Indeed, he added a little abuse of his own, and went off vowing that the men should be reported to headquarters without any delay.

I have often thought that very probably on similar historical occasions the truly great have at first shown temper ; that the magnanimity only came afterwards as an afterthought, as it occurred to the great man that it would look well in his anecdotal history to have shown himself superior to common passions. I have always believed that Napoleon was very much annoyed with the sentry who would not let him pass—"no, not even if he were the Little Corporal himself"—and I am quite certain that that sentry never got on very well in his career.

It was a fortunate circumstance for the other rioters, including myself, that the Marshal was arrested, for after this blunder the brigadier feared to add to his responsibilities, and dismissed the lot of us, taking our own statements as to our social position and importance. I was thus able to get back to my work in good time, after having fully resigned myself to the prospect of spending the night in a cell.

Some time later I was ordered from New York to call on Marshal Macmahon and to ask him to talk about St. Patrick. The *New York World*, for which I was then acting as correspondent in Paris, was publishing a number of interviews with prominent men the world over on St. Patrick and St. Patrick's Day, and Marshal Macmahon's remarks on these subjects were badly wanted. It may be mentioned that at that time the main supporters of Mr. Pulitzer's paper were the Irish Catholics in New

York. I much regretted on receiving this cable that I had not arranged for the acquaintance of a Macmahon in Paris, similar to that which my colleague had formed with the wine-seller. It seemed a hopeless errand to go to call on the ex-President, who had a detestation of all interviewing and newspaper publicity, to ask him silly questions on a subject so absurd. I was, however, able to accomplish my task honestly and without recourse to artifice. The result was a cable despatch to the *New York World* which filled a column and a half of that paper, and on which the editorial comment was that "every student of history would be delighted to read it, and that the story from his own lips of the part which he took in the Franco-Prussian war and his utterances regarding 'what might have been' had a value which made the despatch a document of the highest historical importance." So strongly did the editor hold the view of the importance of what I had considered a very trivial conversation with the gruff old soldier of the Rue de Bellechasse that the whole text of my article was cabled back to the *Figaro* and to *Galignani's Messenger* for insertion. I do not remember that the Marshal said anything of very great importance to me. I expect that the mere fact of having been admitted to a long conversation with the Marshal was considered an achievement. As a matter of fact, there had been no difficulty whatever in getting an introduction to him from a mutual friend. I did not refer to our first meeting in the course of our conversation.

With President Carnot I had some relations. He granted me and my friend Adrien Marie permission to visit him at Fontainebleau, for the purposes of an illustrated article on his life in that palatial summer retreat. He subsequently allowed me to visit the whole of his private apartments in the Elysée; and while I was

viewing one of the drawing-rooms which adjoined his study, he came in and spoke to me in a very friendly manner. He told me that he very well remembered seeing me at the Australian section of the Exhibition the year previously.

I had been present at the President's visit to the Wine Kiosk in the Trocadéro Gardens, and had accompanied the party which escorted him over the place. I remember that, after contemplating a huge kangaroo which stood outside the building, Carnot asked if those animals were dangerous, and one of the Australian magnates answered in English that that depended upon how they were stuffed. I did not translate this remark to the President; and I do not think that, if I had done so, he would have appreciated the humour of it. He stood on his dignity on official occasions, and might have resented chaff. But then, as always, he showed himself most good-natured and obliging.

The different wine-growers whose products were on exhibition in this kiosk were naturally anxious that the President should taste their wines, and the way in which the unfortunate man lent himself to their desires filled me with admiration. Australian wines may possibly be drinkable at table, but drunk between meals must, I should say, be almost poisonous. Yet Carnot drank four large glasses of various horrid *crus*, while protesting that his doctors did not allow him to take anything between meals. The only comment that he made on the wine, which to him must have seemed very nasty, was in a remarkable question which he put, turning round to me, as to whether the Australian wine-growers were certain that they were within their legal rights in giving such names as "claret," "burgundy," "chablis," etc., all French names, to their vintages.

*Apropos* of Adrien Marie, it may not be out of place in this chapter to mention that after his sad death at the hospital at Marseilles I wrote a short article upon the sad position in which his family had been left by his loss, and that this article, being read at Windsor, brought from Queen Victoria to the editor of the London daily in which my account had appeared, a command that any pictures or drawings of his that might be available should be sent down for the royal inspection, with the result that a purchase was made and a sum of money paid over which came to the poor wife and children as a most useful help in a time of great need. Even the humblest of her subjects has reason to remember with gratitude and affection the bountiful kindness of that good woman and great Queen, and to resent with anger how truly in her case the saying has been proved that "the dead die quick."

The last occasion on which I saw Marie was at a *café* near the Hôtel d'Albe, where I had been calling on Dhuleep Singh. It was just after his quarrel with the Queen, his Aventine secession, and while he was clamouring for the return of his estates and family jewels. I had had a hasty conversation with his Royal Highness, while he lay smoking cigarettes in bed in a room on the fourth floor of the Hôtel d'Albe; and from the appearance of the room and the attitude of the waiters I had come to the conclusion that the Koh-i-noor would certainly help, as the French say, "to put butter in the spinach" of this prince.

Marie was then hesitating as to whether or not he should accompany an expedition to Lake Tchad, in Africa, and I spent half an hour in beseeching him not to go. I said what is quite true: that overworked, nervous men who have no constitution and who have

lived hard in cities, may go on indefinitely in their accustomed surroundings; but that once they change these and alter their habits and way of life, they expose themselves to every risk. "It is policy with us," I said, "not to attract the attention of Fate to our persons." He fancied, however, that he was strong enough for the venture, and was brought home dying, to expire in a hospital in Marseilles.

When I heard of his death I felt that I had been a prophet of evil, and prayed that never upon his fateful journey my ominous words might have brought disquiet to his gentle heart. He was a great loss to the coterie of black-and-white artists in Paris, who, working for the illustrated press, were brought into daily contact with the foreign correspondents. I had many dealings with him, and have never worked in collaboration with an artist whom I liked better.

I often think of the day we spent together as the guests of President Carnot at Fontainebleau. I believe that it was thanks to the high esteem in which he was held that we were treated with the courtesy and kindness that were there shown to us. I was struck by the deference shown to him by the officer who escorted us over the President's apartments. I remember also the occasion on which we went down to Bonnelles, to visit the Duchesse d'Uzès. I had preceded him to Limours the night before. It was just on the eve of the day on which the shooting season opened in that department, and the inn at which I put up was crowded. I was accommodated on a mattress in the billiard-room; and the next day, when Marie came down, I made a joke which since then has kept on going the rounds of the world's Press. I have always arrogated to myself the original authorship of the feeble witticism, though very



possibly it has an earlier parentage. I told Marie that, having slept on the billiard table, I had been charged for the use of the table at so much the hour on the night tariff.

The occasion of our visit to the Château de Bonnelles was a *fête champêtre* which the Duchess was giving to the peasantry, and we were both struck by the somewhat parsimonious nature of the entertainment. There was no hotel at Bonnelles, and no arrangements whatever had been made for our necessities. Marie and I were debating whether we should not join a *queue* of peasants who were being regaled on hulking sandwiches and wine and water in a booth on the lawn—for we had eaten nothing all day, and it was then well on in the afternoon—when Meyer, the editor of the *Gaulois*, saw us and came up. He asked if our wants had been attended to, and when Marie told him that his stomach was in his heels, he nobly came to the rescue.

I have heard many bitter things said about Arthur Meyer, but the fact is that that day he was a very raven to two starving prophets. He marched us off to the banqueting hall of the castle, and set the lackeys bustling to attend to our wants. He seemed like a beneficent and autocratic major-domo in the ducal halls, and specially instructed the butler as to the particular brand of claret which he was to serve with the pasty which was put before us. I could not help remarking to Marie that if Arthur Meyer had not been endowed with the journalistic talents which had won him his great wealth and position in Paris, he might have shone in a humbler but not less useful sphere.

It was on that day that I had a conversation with the Duchess, and I conceived a great admiration for the plucky little woman. We talked about Boulanger, and,

referring to the report that she had given the General three millions for the purposes of his campaign, she said that she did not deny it, and that she had been ready to give him anything that it would have been possible for her to give.

I have not seen many duchesses so entirely devoid of affectation and pose. I fancy Madame Lefebvre, in her more amiable moods, must have greatly resembled her. But this Duchess's *sans gêne* is not that which proceeds from bad manners. She is a sportswoman, and has *la bonne franquette* of such. I was not the less impressed by what she said to me about the part she had played in the politics of the moment because as she was speaking she was sitting on the bed in the state bedroom, to which she had conducted me to show me the portrait of some illustrious ancestor of the d'Uzès family, and kept emphasising her remarks by slashing her riding-whip on the counterpane.

We had a long walk back to the station at Limours ; for it was Arthur Meyer's great regret, as he told us, that he could not put a carriage at our disposal. Marie was very much knocked up by the want of food and the fatiguing trudge, and it was remembering this that I suggested to him at our last meeting that he had not the strength to face the hardships of the African expedition.

## CHAPTER XVII

President Carnot—A Garden Party at Fontainebleau—A Reception at the Elysée—A First Glimpse of Loubet—James G. Blaine—A Conversation at the Hôtel Binda—Blaine on Various Subjects—The Statesman and his Shadow—American Politicians—A Presidential Shooting Party—Carnot's First Cabinet—Carnot's Assassination—A Card from Casimir-Perier—Henri d'Orleans and Esterhazy—The Marquis de Flers and Comte d'Hérisson—On Paying Members of Parliament—General Boulanger

AFTER our informal meeting in the drawing-room at the Elysée, it became possible for me to obtain by indirect means expressions of opinion from Monsieur Carnot on various occasions, and though I must disclaim all responsibility for such headings as were often prefixed in New York to my cable despatches as, "President Carnot discusses Boulanger with Our Correspondent," I could fairly claim to be in touch with the President of the Republic. Not very long after my attendance at one of his first receptions at the Elysée I received a card of invitation to one of Madame Carnot's garden parties at Fontainebleau, and spent three very agreeable and instructive hours amongst the better dressed of the French Republicans. The buffet, which at Presidential parties is always the centre of attraction, was laid in the Louis XIV. kiosque, in the centre of the famous carp pond, built by François Premier—the scene, in fact, of the flirtations between the Roi Soleil and poor Mademoiselle de La Vallière. That afternoon there were also

private theatricals in the theatre of the Palace, which had not been used ever since the days of Napoleon III. The last performance that had been given there was one in which Empress Eugenie took part in a play entitled *Les Portraits de la Marquise*, which had been specially written for the imperial *comédienne* by Octave Feuillet. I remember with what pride the old novelist once showed me the blotting-book which the Empress had presented to him as a souvenir of that occasion. A beautiful portrait of herself was framed in the cover, and in it was written: "In affectionate remembrance to my author.—EUGENIE."

At a reception held at the Elysée on January 13, 1888, I was honoured with a few minutes' conversation with the President, in the course of which he mentioned the name of James Blaine. Monsieur Carnot asked about him, on hearing that I had recently been in his company, with much interest, and said how pleased he had been to meet him during his stay in Paris. I described a conversation I had had with the American statesman, who still at that time was the first favourite for the Republican nomination as candidate to the Presidency of the United States. The reception that night followed on a dinner given to the commanding generals of the French army, and was, I remember, a very brilliant one. All Paris was there, and no better crowd of well-dressed women than those had ever before been collected in the Elysée salons since the days of Marshal Macmahon.

We were not to witness that night what, under President Grévy, one so often saw at the Elysée receptions, the storming of the buffet by famished and eager democrats, literally fighting to get to the tables where food and drink were being dispensed. Nor that night did I see any one filling his pockets with provisions and

cigars. Under the Grévy *régime* that was a common sight on gala nights at the Elysée.

Madame Carnot, I remember, wore a very beautiful ball dress of white brocade, *décolleté*, with a long straight train. On either side of the skirt was a panel of white satin, embroidered with gold bands. The corsage also glittered with the similar rich embroidery. She wore her magnificent diamonds. Poor woman! she looked radiantly happy, little realizing with what anguish she was later on to pay for these transient grandeurs. Fallières was in great form, expounding in sonorous phrases the reasons which had prompted the Government to dismiss a magistrate named Vigneau from his post. It was that night, I think, that I first saw Emile Loubet. He was talking amidst a group of senators, and his topic, as usual, was about wine from a financial point of view. A few days previously the famous Romanée-Conti vineyard had been offered for sale, but had not found a single bidder, though the original price had been reduced by three thousand pounds, and he was heard to wonder what the American millionaires were thinking about to let such a good investment escape them. General Logerot was talking with a lady about the duel on the Belgian frontier, where a French officer had shot a Prussian officer who had insulted a French lady. It is difficult for even the greatest men to refrain from talking on their special subjects.

The gathering was a fashionable one, not unworthy of the traditions of the place. The people were well dressed; there were a number of brilliant officers present, and the whole atmosphere was one which one was unaccustomed to in Republican circles. Towards the end of Carnot's Presidency this atmosphere was wanting. The democrats invaded the salons of the Elysée with



the airs of men who had a right to share in the enjoyments of power. Some very queer people were seen to have obtained cards of admission, and I remember one night witnessing a quarrel between an American journalist and a countrywoman of his which created quite a scandal. The journalist reproached the woman with her presence, saying that a person of her reputation ought not to have ventured to have presented herself in such a place. She retorted that her claims to be present were at least as good as his, and charged him publicly with being a blackmailer.

The meeting with James Blaine, to which I referred in my conversation with the President, had taken place at the Hôtel Binda on the previous December 16. He was then thinking of going on to Rome. "I came to Paris in October," he said, "intending only to stay three weeks, and here I am still. I want to get away. I don't like your Parisian winters, and I don't like your French fires. They are not at all comfortable. You have to wear very heavy coats outside, and you don't get warm when you get back indoors."

"But, Mr. Blaine," I said, "you have pretty cold winters in the States, have you not?"

"On the whole," he said, "we are accustomed to milder weather in the States. The most northern point of the United States is about on a level with London, while Virginia is about on a par with Africa. Yet we have rigorous winters, too, in the States—worse than in St. Petersburg. Just think! the coldest weather they have there is eight degrees Fahrenheit, while sometimes in America we have it as cold as thirty-two degrees."

We talked on a great variety of topics, *à bâtons rompus*. It was in these terms that the Presidential candidate spoke of his introduction to the newly elected

President of France: "Through the courtesy of Mr. McLane, Mr. Morton and myself were presented yesterday. He received us with the greatest cordiality, and charmed us with his civility. He took me to his wife's reception, and placed the Presidential box at the Opera at my disposal."

Mr. Blaine then spoke about the recent election in France. "I was pleasantly surprised," he said, "at the very quiet way in which the recent crisis was resolved. The French are very demonstrative, but at the bottom have excellent good sense. I was at the Versailles Congress, and saw the whole proceedings. One thing struck me, and that is that of all the Houses of Parliament I have seen it is in the American House of Congress where the members behave with the most decorum. The shouting, the cheering, and the 'Hear, hear!' that you are so fond of in England, would not be tolerated there, nor are they ever heard. Nor would any Member of Congress think of keeping his hat on his head, as the English Members of Parliament do. Yet I must say that a little applause is a great encouragement to a speaker, just as it is to an actor. The Roman actors used to demand it, you remember, with a final 'Vos Plaudite.' In America approbation is shown to the speaker by the members crowding round him."

Mr. Blaine then asked me several questions about myself, and told me that my name had "got to America." "I sat next to a Congressman of your name in Congress some years ago," he said. He began to talk about his children; and *apropos* of the lessons which one of his daughters was receiving in a French school, he said: "One thing that I have noticed about the French educational system is what I may describe as its somewhat narrow patriotism. The geography of France

appears, for instance, to be the only geography that the French teachers think worth knowing; and according to them the eighty-seven departments of France are far and away more important and worthy of study than the thirty-two States of the Union."

We talked about patriotism, and, amongst many things, Mr. Blaine said: "I fancy the Germans must feel considerable irritation at the Parisians for keeping the statue of Strasburg on the Place de la Concorde, and at the way they go on about Alsace-Lorraine. The French seem to forget that they originally took these countries from the Germans; that the language, customs, ways of thinking, and even names of these people are German; and, moreover, that it is to the fact of their having the plodding, industrious, go-ahead character of the German race that they owe their prosperity and their wealth. It is my opinion that in three generations at most the people of Alsace and Lorraine will once again be Germans, heart and soul."

In due course we came to talk about literature, and Blaine said: "I am not astonished to hear that the French take no interest whatever in the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy. The French know next to nothing about American affairs, and very little about the English. I myself am interested in the question, in so far that I know Mr. Donnelly. He is a very ingenious and subtle student. My own opinion on the question is that it is unfair and practically impossible to argue as to the authenticity of the works of a man who died three hundred years ago. It does sound improbable that a man like Shakespeare, a loungee in tap-rooms, a convicted poacher and ne'er-do-weel, who did not even succeed in any measure in his profession as a third-rate actor, should be the author of such works, and that we should owe the

sublimest literature of any age and tongue to such a man. But, as I say, argument *ab improbable* is eminently unfair. Marlowe, for instance, was a man of notoriously bad life. One might, arguing *ab improbable*, state that it is impossible that he should be the author of his works. But this has never been contested. Again, look at Burns. When we hear of him lounging about in village pothouses and putting down the whisky and the gin, we might by the same argument prove that he was not the author of the beautiful poems which he wrote."

Poor Mr. Blaine was at that time being haunted by the correspondent of an American paper who had a French nobiliary title. "He is," said he, "the plague of my life. He followed me here from Florence. He hangs about the hotel. Sometimes he comes walking into this room as if by mistake, so as to have the opportunity to apologise and thus begin a conversation. I have told him a hundred times that I will not be interviewed, but he will not let himself be beaten off. The hotel people can't turn him out, for he has engaged a room here, and has threatened to scarify them in his paper if they give him notice. I am not a betting-man, Sherard, but I'd wager that he has got his ear to the key-hole of the door at this very minute. Just you look out and see if you don't find him hanging about in the passage as you go out."

Here the ex-Secretary was interrupted by some one who pushed open the door of the private sitting-room in which we had been talking. Blaine ran to cover like a scared rabbit. I saw him dart across the room and plunge headlong into an adjoining bed-room, where he locked himself in. The intruder was not, however, the count, but a chambermaid who had come to attend to the fire. When she had gone, the American statesman

returned to me. His face was really quite pale. He said: "I haven't the nerve to face the man. A few days ago I had to ring the bell to ask the manager to come and turn him out. He sticks to one like a leech. Even in the States I never came across such a pertinacious fellow."

It was quite as Mr. Blaine had expected. When I had got outside his room I found Count de ——— standing quite close to the door, pretending to be reading some advertisements which were hung up in a frame in the passage. He fastened on to me at once. "Part à deux," he said. I told him that I did not run my business on mutual principles. "But you might tell me what you were talking about." I said, what was quite true, "We talked about green peas and the French way of cooking them. Secretary Blaine prefers the American style. And we talked about Bacon." With that I got rid of him.

It was to a newspaper man of the same class that one day, during Blaine's stay in Paris, I told that I had heard from a grisette who was acquainted with a young woman of her class "qui avait des bontés" for one of Blaine's relations who was studying in Paris, that Blaine often went to visit the irregular *ménage*, and had indeed been seen talking to hismorganatic relation in the streets. "Say, there's money in that!" cried this very sordid-minded scribe. "A snapshot of James G. Blaine talking in the streets of Paris with that abandoned young female should upset the Republican apple-cart, and should be worth I won't say how many hundred dollars from a Democratic paper." He actually went on to propose that we should contrive to get such a "picture," and was surprised at my indignation at the suggestion. "You'll not make your fortune with those prejudices," he said,



He was a very yellow journalist, and really saw no harm in the villainy which he had proposed.

During my life in Paris I was brought into contact with most of the great American politicians. I wonder what has become of Mr. Bugg Grub, who loomed large in his own estimation as an American politician in 1888? Senator Ewart, who used to dress like Palmerston, received me whenever he came to Paris, and was a courtly and interesting old gentleman. I think that he tried to model himself on Gladstone, with whom he fancied himself distantly related. I remember meeting Secretary Whitney and being asked to call upon him at the Hôtel du Rhin. At Whitelaw Reid's receptions one came into contact with the members of the French Government. I was impressed with the entire absence of arrogance which was displayed by these great men. I suppose that in a country which is ruled by its press, a journalist is considered a person of some importance.

To return to my connection with Carnot, the first occasion on which, so to speak, I was in his company was in 1887, that is to say, just after his election, and very shortly after his first meeting with Mr. Blaine. I had been anxious to be present at the first of the Presidential shooting-parties, and I will admit that it was because I had been told, first, that it was very difficult to witness such a gathering, and, secondly, because the sight of the Republican Ministers disguised as sportsmen had been described to me as an entertainment not to be missed. I had been able to procure a card to Marly, and on December 28 I spent a couple of hours watching the new rulers of France in their sporting diversions.

On arriving at Marly Forest, I had to undergo some examination before the head-keeper, and though I was not actually "rubbed down," great care was

taken to see that I carried no arms. I was then conducted to the *pavillon de chasse*, a little kiosque on an eminence, from which a good view could be obtained. Hither presently President Carnot drove up, accompanied by his friends. Fallières was with him, amongst others, and the amiable General Brugère. Monsieur Carnot was attired in a very sportsmanlike suit of tweeds, and carried a double-barrelled hammerless gun. There were about fifty beaters collected on a spot some yards distant from the kiosque. Colonel Lichtenstein and General Brugère had the direction of the shooting-party. Numbers were distributed to the ten guns, indicating to each guest which *layon* or walk he was to follow. Twelve paths or *layons* run through the Marly preserves, and down each one guest walks. Under the kings of France there were only five *layons* in these preserves; under the Empire there were nine; and as France becomes more and more democratic and the sovereign people is admitted to the sport of kings, the number, doubtless, will be further added to.

In those days, however, it was still very difficult to obtain an invitation to one of the President's shooting-parties, and Colonel Lichtenstein told me that he never recommended a man's name unless he knew him to be a good shot, while of foreigners only the most distinguished were ever invited. Of the *layons* the middle one is the broadest, and it was down this path that that day President Carnot began to walk. Monsieur Fallières took the *layon* on his chief's right hand, and for once in his career was following in the steps of the Grand Veneur of the old *régime*. From where I stood I could see the President as he slowly advanced, with his gun resting on his arm. Presently, very quietly and steadily, like everything he did, he raised his gun and

fired. It was a shot which must have satisfied Lichtenstein, and a cock pheasant crashed down in a perfect storm of snow. The President always has the first shot, and after Carnot had fired and the signal had thus been given, the guns began a regular fusillade. No retrievers being used, much of the wounded game got away, and one could hear all those pitiful sounds that at every battue cry to heaven. I could not help wondering whether Carnot, who was a kindhearted man, really took pleasure in this slaughter of tame birds, and why our democratic rulers felt it incumbent upon them to ape the sports of a more ruthless time. Some poor hare that had been shot, but not killed, kept up such a screaming noise that, sickened, I walked away and did not return till the tableau, or day's bag, had been heaped up in front of the kiosque, at the end of the shooting.

There were far too many rabbits in the tableau to look well, and Brugère said to Carnot: "We shall soon want the services of Monsieur Pasteur at Marly." At that time Monsieur Pasteur was trying some experiments with his new method for the extermination of rabbits on a big estate near Rheims, with a view to competing for the offer made by Australia. Most of the game which was shot at Carnot's parties was sent to the hospitals. Under President Grévy, it was said, arrangements had been made with the leading poulterers at the Halles, for in those days the principle at the Elysée was that there was no such thing as "des petites économies."

Fallières was very satisfied with himself that day, and his fat face was radiant with smiles as he emerged from his *layon*. He was then Minister of Justice in Carnot's first Cabinet, and it was said of him that he

was very anxious to throw off his allegiance to Jules Ferry. However, very shortly before that day I had seen him in the antechamber of Ferry's apartment in the Avenue de Iéna, where he waited patiently a long time to be received by his political patron. We were told that he was a man of very delicate health, but he certainly did not look so at the shooting-party. He was always very carefully dressed, and was known as *le beau Fallières*. I have every reason to believe that he will be the next President of the Republic.

Emile Loubet, by the way, was Minister of Public Works in that Cabinet. We were far from expecting to see this very quiet and retiring man in the place of President Carnot, though we knew that he enjoyed very great influence in the Senate. He was at that time known as an authority on all things relating to the culture of the vine, and, like his chief, Carnot, professed to dislike all topics purely political. His main subjects of conversation in those days were finance and business. His opponents used to speak of him as obscure. He has since then come well into the fierce light which beats on curule chairs. He also used to dress well; indeed, Carnot's first Cabinet was largely peopled by respectably dressed Republicans. It is true that the Prime Minister, Tirard, by profession a maker of Brummagem jewellery, affected the disorderly appearance and personal neglect of the Republicans of 1848.

I had been discussing this Ministry with Henri Rochefort, at the *Intransigeant* office, some days before the shooting-party, and he had said: “This Ministry is an *opera-bouffe* Ministry, a set of dummies thrust into office to tide over the New Year, when they will certainly all be kicked out. Logerot is the only good man amongst them. He is a fine soldier; and Boulanger,

with whom I have been dining to-night, has nothing but good to say of him. It was to Logerot that Boulanger handed over the command at Tunis." This conversation with Rochefort took place very shortly after the attempt on Ferry's life, and I had been able to give him an account of the state of Monsieur Ferry, as I had seen him in his drawing-room. He told me that he had been dining with Boulanger, and that they had been talking all the evening of the miserable farce of the "Tonkinois's" wounds.

"Just fancy," said Monsieur Rochefort, "I was told to-night at dinner that on the morrow of the attack Ferry was dressed to go out shooting. That shows how seriously ill he is. Reinach, of *La République Française*, vouches for this. Jules Ferry is playing the part of Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*. You can imagine the fright that the Ferryites were thrown into. 'We must make people think that he is dying,' they cried, and rushed to put him to bed. What they want is to make as much capital as possible out of this event, with the view of the ultimate election of their chief as President of the Republic. They want to force Carnot to resign, and this, you will see, will be their only political programme. They have all the trumps in their hands. Carnot is an excellent man. He won't try to make money out of his office, as Grévy did, nor save so much a year out of his stipend. He is, however, a man of very small capacities, nervous, unaccustomed to such a position, but above all hampered by the interference of his old father, who is over eighty, and who is an Opportunist of the deepest dye. Yes, and also crushed down by the weight of the *grandeur* of his grandfather."

The nervous man of small capacity showed himself,



when his last hour came, a man of iron nerve and a fine capacity for playing the hero. "Excuse me, doctor, but you are hurting me," he said, when the agonies he was suffering at the hands of the surgeons after the attack in Lyons became too intolerable. He died like a Roman. With the exception of the rascally politicians who saw in his death a possible opening for their own ambitions, his death was deplored throughout the length and breadth of France. The news of Caserio's crime and its consequences reached me down at Cap Breton, a small fishing village on the Spanish frontier. At six in the morning the village crier came along beating his drum. Every now and then he paused, and from a telegram form read the message addressed to the mayor of every commune. His eyes were streaming with tears: "I have the atrocious grief to inform you . . ." it began. Women followed him sobbing. Even little children were crying. One emotional Southerner sitting outside the inn of the village was seen to tear his hair, while uttering horrid imprecations. I bethought myself of the chronicler who wrote of Queen Elizabeth's funeral and his lines beginning:

I think her bargemen might with easier thighs  
Have rowed her thither in her people's eyes.

The dead die quick, but in many thousand homes in France Carnot's gentle memory is kept alive. For my part, as I write, a large portrait of the murdered President looks down upon me. The date of his birth is given below his picture, and the date on which he died: "Mort au champ d'honneur à Lyon le 24 Juin, 1894." One thinks with affectionate remembrance of those who have been kind to one in life.

Amongst my papers I have a souvenir of the gentle-

man who followed him in the Presidency of the French Republic. Here it is :

CASIMIR-PERIER,

*Très Reconnaissant de l'Article qu'il a  
lu et qu'il Conserve.*

23, RUE NITOT (PLACE DES ETATS-UNIS).

This was a card which he sent me after I had published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* an article in which I described the abominable attacks which were being directed against the new President, and explained what was their purport. The principal English papers are always read very carefully at the Elysée, and it was some gratification to me to know that my article had come under the eyes of the person most likely to be interested in it. I did not name the man who was at the bottom of the attacks on the President. He was obscure in those days. To-day he is a man of great importance, but I will not give him here any further publicity.

Of Prince Henri d'Orléans I saw what little was to be seen. This hardy explorer was rarely in Paris. I had been introduced to him by the Marquis de Flers, the friend, agent, and historiographer of the Orleans family. I often thought that if the hazard of birth had made Prince Henri the heir-apparent, the Royalist cause would have had a much greater chance of success in France. He was full of pluck and energy, of winning grace and bonhomie. I may here give denial to the lie that on the steps of the Palais de Justice, during the Zola trial, the Prince embraced Esterhazy. The only scrap of

foundation for this malicious falsehood was that, with three or four hundred other people, Henri d'Orléans was coming down the steps which led to the Place Dauphine at the same time as Esterhazy. I was walking just behind the Commandant, and saw everything that happened. One old gentleman, who looked like a retired non-commissioned officer, did accost Esterhazy and express his sympathy with him for what he had undergone during his cross-examination by Albert Clémenceau, and some shouts of "Vive Esterhazy" were raised. But the Prince took no part whatever in this demonstration. He was accompanied by three gentlemen, and I have often wondered that no denial has been published by them also. Whilst the old half-pay officer was embracing the Commandant, Henri d'Orléans and his friends hurried down the steps to a club brougham which was waiting for them, and I followed, just in time to salute the Prince. We exchanged a few words at the carriage door, and then he drove off. The motive of the people who invented this falsehood was to discredit the Prince on the one hand by making it appear that he was taking an active part in the political struggle, and Esterhazy, on the other hand, by representing him as the *protégé*, and by implication the tool, of the Royalist party. It is a lie which I have long wished to nail to the counter.

The Marquis de Flers was an amiable old gentleman of the best type of French nobleman. I used to go to him for my information about the Royalist party and the princes of the House of Orleans. As the Royalist agent in Paris, he was a fountain-head of news. Another friend whom I possessed in that camp was the Baron de Grangey, sportsman and author, whose beautiful and charming wife perished in the fire at the Bazar de Charité.

For information about the progress of the Bonapartist cause I had several friends to go to. Until Comte d'Hérison, the diplomat and author, was appointed to a post in the colonies, I used frequently to call upon him at his house in the Avenue de la Grande Armée. He had a wonderful collection of portraits of Napoleon, and I remember how greatly he inflamed my conceit, on the first occasion on which I called there, by telling me that as he came into the room where I was waiting for him, and caught sight of me sideways looking up at some picture on the wall, I was "Bonaparte, retour d'Égypte tout craché," and he showed me a sketch of the young General at that period. I fancied that the length of my hair was the main point of resemblance; but one is always half-hearted in repelling compliments of a gratifying nature. For the rest, the last century produced thousands of pseudo-Napoleons, and Lucina still casts in that mould. I presume that the explanation of it is that the tremendous impress made upon the imagination of humanity by that superhuman man manifests itself in this way also. It is a well-known physiological fact that pregnant women can communicate to their offspring some vague resemblance to a type on which their thoughts during pregnancy have been concentrated. We have Biblical authority for that, and what is recorded of the Greek women need not here be repeated.

The Comte d'Hérison was a charming man and a clever writer. He sent me many of his books. One which particularly interested me was his history of the *Cabinet Noir*, which is the name given in Paris to that police department where private letters are opened and read before being delivered to the people for whom they are intended, when they are supposed to contain political or other information as to which the Government or the

police are curious. I could tell many stories of my own experiences at the hands of the Cabinet Noir. Another Bonapartist acquaintance on whom I had counted for exclusive news about the party was G. de Cassagnac, the brother of the editor of *L'Autorité*. Unfortunately, very shortly after we had come to know each other, he was killed in a duel.

The foreign correspondent who lives in a country which is under a Republican form of Government is more likely to number amongst his acquaintances the most famous of the political men in that country than one who exercises his profession in a monarchy. In France one gets almost an undue sense of one's importance as one reviews the distinguished politicians with whom one has had dealings. The shabby deputy who takes an absinthe with you at your expense at a boulevard *café* may be Prime Minister one day, and the Senator whose flat adjoins yours, and whose *bonne* sometimes asks your cook for the loan of a frying-pan, may by a turn of the political wheel be seen driving behind a coachman with a tricolor cockade on his hat. In the newspaper world one hobnobs with possible great men, for when a French politician is "out" he usually takes to journalism. A gentleman who was quite recently one of the Cabinet, some years ago delivered with his own hands at my porter's lodge a book which he had written. It was accompanied by a letter asking me to be so good as to review it as lengthily as possible. I was addressed as "Cher Confrère" (I am not certain that it was not "Cher Maître").

A great American newspaper proprietor once complained to me that his Paris correspondents, after a short stay in that capital, developed the airs and graces of "lofty young diplomats"; and really there is, as I



pointed out to the editor, some excuse for them. With potential Excellencies courting their favours, they may well delude themselves as to their social importance.

In which connection I wish to say that a conclusion which every one comes to who watches the political world in Paris is that it is not at all a good thing that Members of Parliament should receive stipends from the nation. A political career is in every country, one knows, a speculation ; but where the first steps are made so easy for the aspirants, a very worthless type of men are attracted to the game. The briefless barrister, the unsuccessful lawyer, the apothecary of the Homais type, the veterinary surgeon who has failed to please his *clientèle*, the journalist with no other talents than that of self-advertisement, see in the subsidy paid to Members of Parliament an immediate inducement to postulate for Parliamentary honours. There is a cash inducement to serve one's country. This there is, of course, elsewhere also ; but in other countries the payment is deferred at least until very serious services have been rendered. I want no better proof that in France many men engage in politics with no other immediate aspirations than to become entitled, as deputies, to an income of nine thousand francs for five years, than the fact that there exist in Paris financial agencies which are prepared to purchase for a lump sum the whole of the annual payments to which the newly elected deputy becomes entitled. Nine thousand francs a year for five years means a total of forty-five thousand francs, and for this the speculators are prepared to offer a present value of, say, twelve thousand francs, to be paid part in cash and part in goods. Yes, the stuffed crocodile and the old masters figure, as in Harpagon's days, in these sordid transactions. The speculator's risk is limited to the

contingency of the death of the ex-annuitant, for a dissolution of Parliament is not to be feared in France under the conditions of the constitution, and a Dixhuit Brumaire only occurs once in a while. Boulanger caused some qualms of anxiety to the agencies in his day ; but, again, a Boulanger only comes once in a long while.

It is not a good thing, I maintain, that the suspicion may lurk in the breasts of the electorate that a man solicits their suffrages with no other motive than the wish to lay hands on a sum of a few thousand francs, a Crucifixion attributed to Michel Angelo, and a barge-load of Sevilla oranges. The certainty always subsists that as soon as the money has been spent and the goods have been disposed of, the new deputy will be driven to unworthy traffickings by which to earn his living. I remember one journalist who was elected to the Chamber and a month after his election was trying to borrow a five-pound note. He had sold his stipend to a firm of usurers in the Rue de Rougemont for the equivalent of four hundred pounds, and the largest part of this sum had gone in paying off what he had borrowed for his electioneering expenses. It cannot be a good thing that amongst the legislators of a country there should be such destitute men. One has heard of the deputy who used to give as his address, "Under the third tree to the left as you go up the Champs-Élysées." We have all heard of the member of the French Parliament who, being without a domicile, used to take the train every night to Dijon, riding first-class free on producing his deputy's medal. He said that he enjoyed the most refreshing slumbers stretched out on the cushions, and that, after a while, the break at Dijon, where he took the train back to Paris, did not prevent him from getting his proper rest on the return trip. I do not think that we require

the services of politicians of this description in England, and I trust that we may never have to witness what can sometimes be seen in Paris on the days when the deputies draw their warrants, namely, a headlong race between an honourable gentleman and a solicitor with a garnishee order.

Those that saw them will not soon forget the horde of hungry politicians who descended upon Versailles for the National Assembly, after the resignation of Casimir-Perier had rendered the election of another President necessary. Every unclean appetite seemed to be awakened; the rush to the Palace was like the long, jubilant gallop of wolves which scent their prey. True descendants of Jourdain Coupe-Tête, the democrats filled the silent city of departed kings with their Rialto chafferings. And a Rialto indeed it was, where every vote had its price in promises deferred. The merriment which filled the courtyards where in former days the epigrams of a St. Simon, the wit of a Molière, had won smiles from even rebellious lips, was like one of the horse-laughs of history. And was it not a merry thing that the mob of Paris should have torn from this Palace the gentle Louis, to send back these a century later to fetch another ruler?

The election of Faure came as a surprise to all, and to none more perhaps than to Monsieur de Blowitz, with whom I was sitting in the big room in the Hôtel des Reservoirs, when a scout from the Palace announced to us that Waldeck-Rousseau's supporters were going to give their votes to Faure. Till the very last minute it had been almost a certainty that Brisson would be elected, and heavy bets had been made in his favour. But it was Jean-Qui-Rit and not Jean-Qui-Pleure who came in first. There was little jubilation amongst the

democrats as they returned to Paris. The *vieilles barbes* were in consternation. There was nothing to be hoped for any of them from the Faure *régime*. One hirsute, alcoholic, and ill-dressed Republican of the Extremest Left who travelled back to Paris in the same carriage as I did, kept wagging a dirty forefinger at me as he repeated, with the tedious insistence of those who have drunk too much, "La République, monsieur, est fichue," only he did not use the word *fichue*, but a stronger term. "No, let us rather say," said a stumpy little senator who was in our compartment, "que la République a subi un temps d'arrêt, un temps d'arrêt, monsieur." The *arrêt*, if *arrêt* there were, was to last four years, during which time the Republic afforded us the entertaining spectacle of a democracy aping the airs and graces of the old *régime*. It was still the rule of the frockcoat, as Macmahon styled it contemptuously; but at any rate the frockcoat was made *chez* Dusautoy, and was not picked up on the pavement of the Grand Temple. And in modern France the whole political struggle can be summed up as a rivalry between the frockcoat *de chez* Dusautoy and the ready-made suit from the Temple.

The time was when the *régime* of the black coat was gravely threatened, and when one had every reason to expect to see the military dolman in the foremost place. I am referring to the episode of General Boulanger. I think that I cannot better describe the impression that was produced upon me by this man than by giving here a copy of what I wrote just after I heard the news of his death. On the afternoon of October 2, 1891, I happened into the *Figaro* office just as the news from Ixelles had arrived. This is what I wrote that same night :

"To the floods of ink that will flow over the tiny

trickle of General Boulanger's blood, will you allow me to contribute my quota? I am all the more anxious to do so because, among Paris correspondents, I was specially 'inside' his career, proclaimed him years ago, and deserted him when the landau and the duchesses came upon the scene, as an *homme* politically *perdu*.

"I suppose that we shall hear of the 'immense emotion' created in Paris by the news that was flashed from Brussels to-day at noon. Alas for the rarity of human charity! Where Paris has not shrugged her shoulders, she has yawned. When the papers came out with their headlines, people, hearing the cries of the hawkers, thought it was news of the suicide of the Courbevoie murderer, and were disappointed rather than interested, the actuality of Breton being so much greater than that of Boulanger. I have never seen a piece of news of such importance, psychological rather than political, fall so terribly flat as this. It is true that there are some who still do not believe its truth, for the canard is ever on the wing; and some, perhaps, like the peasants round Taunton, about King Monmouth, cannot believe it; but with the large majority it has been, as I have said, a yawn, where it was not a shrug of the shoulders. 'Tiens, Boulanger s'est donné la mort,' 'C'est-ce qu'il avait de mieux à faire.' Such are the remarks one hears as Paris beats the opal absinthe.

"So much for the boulevards. Elsewhere, in Belleville, Neuilly, and such populous quarters, the indifference is even more marked. 'It is not that which will prevent me from taking another glass,' says, in my presence, over the zinc of a *marchand de vins* counter, a former supporter of the General. At the clubs the same senti-



ments are expressed, but in politer language, and the Bacchus here preferred to piety is Schweppe's and Courvoisier.

“ But indifference amongst the general, what chuckling and meanest delight among those that hounded him from the first! ‘A la bonne heure!’ Bogey is dead and buried. Hannibal shall never again menace our gates and our sinecures.

“ Still, there must be some who will regret the large-handed, amiable, and courteous gentleman that he was. I have seen Boulanger many times; and even at the height of his success and triumph, when the crown was in his grasp and France was at his feet, I never once saw him arrogant or proud. Always a gentleman, the humbler he who approached him, the more courteous he was.

“ I remember once calling on him at the Hôtel du Louvre, when half political and perhaps all intriguing Paris was antechambering him. There were hundreds waiting to see him, and only the very few could be received. The little page-boy Joseph was swollen with importance, and had a Court of his own. About five minutes before the reception-hour closed there came a ragged old woman and asked to be admitted. Joseph laughed at the presumption. ‘There are hundreds before you,’ he said; ‘it's not worth taking in your name.’ The old woman cried. She had walked twelve miles that morning. We were able to persuade Joseph to take in her name, and he did so with shruggings of the shoulders and amidst the sneers of the expectant suitors. I engaged the old woman in conversation as to her business. It appeared that she had been a *cantinière* in the war, had had her sons killed and her house burned, and for nineteen years had

in vain demanded compensation from the Government. Joseph was absent but a minute, and when he returned it was to announce, not that General This or Deputy That was to pass the desired portal, but that 'Madame Aubert was to be so kind as to enter,' which she, in rags, did amidst the envy of the hundreds who were waiting. She was inside the room for twenty minutes, and when she returned she was radiant. 'He has taken all my papers,' she said to me, 'and has promised immediate attention. I have got in five minutes from him what from others I failed to obtain in twenty years. And look here!' With these words she opened her hand and showed me three gold pieces.

"There is one man in Paris to-day who will feel proud, and that is André Castelin, who yesterday lost his place as editor of the *Cocarde* because he refused, at the order of the proprietor of the paper, to 'rat' and turn against Boulanger. As for another man about whom one thinks at once at this juncture, and wonders what his feelings may be to-day, as I passed just now before the *Café Américain* I saw him, eye-glass fixed and Londres between his teeth, slowly mixing an opal absinthe with a crew of sycophants around him. The thirty pieces of silver were spent long ago; and as for potters' fields, there be none on the boulevards of Paris. And if there were, it would not be otherwise: the *Café Américain* is a so much more pleasant place."

I think that it was on the occasion of one of my last visits to the General at the *Hôtel du Louvre* that I began to doubt his capacity for playing the part which circumstances and the general discontent were forcing upon him. He seemed quite nerveless; he appeared like a man exhausted from a long debauch. "Mon cher garçon," he said, patting me affectionately on the

shoulder, "let us leave politics aside and let us smoke a cigar." The floor of the room—it was a fourth-floor room in the Hôtel du Louvre—was strewn with letters and cards. Here was another sign of his hopeless *insouciance*. He knew himself watched night and day; he knew the rancours that had been excited against him and the certain reprisals that would follow on his supporters if he succumbed. Yet he left all the letters which had been written to him lying about so that any one might gather them up in handfuls. I could have filled my pockets with papers at a time when at the Place Beauvau they would have been paid for at their weight in gold. After his fall many hundreds of poor Government employés were dismissed because amongst the General's papers some missive from them to him had been found. One very promising *commissaire de police* was ruthlessly flung out of his office merely because one of his visiting-cards was discovered amongst these papers. The fright of those in power had been great, and their revenge was in proportion.

After I had lighted my cigar, the General allowed me to smoke for a minute or two in silence, while he sat absolutely inert. At last he said, as though waking from a dream: "Are there many people outside?" I thought he must be joking; but he seemed quite in earnest, and I gathered that his dreamy nature did not realize many of the actualities of the position in which he was placed.

I said: "Mon Général, for the last half-hour, that is to say ever since Joseph brought in my card, I have been going up and down in the lift of the hotel!"

"Et pourquoi ça?" he cried, with a smile coming into his eyes.

"The passage is packed; the stairs are packed;

every landing down to the ground floor is packed with people who are waiting to see you. I could not find an inch of standing room in the crush outside your door, and so I remained in the lift, and have been up to the ceiling of the hotel and down into its lowest depths awaiting your pleasure, I do not know how many times. I had made matters right with Joseph and with the lift-boy, and as soon as my turn came to be admitted, I stepped from my comfortable seat in the lift and forced my way through to your door."

He laughed, and then relapsed into silence again. After a while he said: "*Que je suis las, que je suis las.*" I rose more than once to leave, for he seemed to have nothing to say, and I knew that hundreds were waiting to see him; but each time he signed me to keep my seat. I was in his company that day for as long as it takes a careful smoker to consume a Havanna cigar, but during the time he barely spoke a thousand words to me. When I bade him farewell he rose and walked me to the door with his hand on my shoulder, and told me the hour at which I should always find him at home. When I got outside I found myself the observed of every eye. I fancy that the people waiting there imagined from the length of time that I had been with the General that I had been laying before him the most weighty proposals. I may have figured to the Government spies as that phantom emissary of Pitt and Coburg who ever haunts the dreams of French politicians. I doubt not that some computed how many bags of English gold I had been deputed to lay at the General's feet. The truth of the matter, probably, was that Boulanger was very tired and very bored, and kept me with him so as to keep others out who might have been more persistent in making him

talk and in worrying him with proposals which that day he had not the energy to consider. It is sometimes a good thing to be able to keep silent in people's company. For the rest, those twenty minutes were very eloquent to me, and I read the man's character as I had never read it before. But I did not despair of his future until he began to eat the corn of conquest in the grass.



## CHAPTER XVIII

General Boulanger—His Love of Legality—The Duel with Floquet—The Cause of his Flight—A Newspaper "Beat"—The Marquis de Morés—His Quarrel with Constans—His Duel with Camille Dreyfus—A Trio of Princes—Married yet Single—Prince Murat and the Heiress—The Tailor's Widow and her Second Husband—A Prince amongst Cooks—The Gastronomical Director—General Tcheng-Ki-Tong—How he was lured back to China—A Sinister Suggestion—How a Reputation was Made.

THE true cause of Boulanger's failure was his absolute respect for legality. He wished to make his *coup d'état* without breaking any laws. He wished to make his omelette without breaking any eggs. He had a feminine horror of bloodshed. Dixhuit Brumaire of the Year VIII and December 2 of the year 1852 inspired him with nothing but indignant repulsion. On the night of his election as deputy for Paris he could have marched into the Elysée and have taken possession. Floquet had packed his trunks, and Carnot had sent his family out of Paris. I was in and about the Restaurant Durand the whole night, but already, at half-past twelve, everybody had realised that nothing was just about to happen. "Nothing has changed. Paris has only another deputy," is the answer I made to scores of people on the Place de la Madeleine as, at half-past twelve, I emerged from the Boulangist headquarters. Every one had expected that that night the General would lead a revolution which, from the entire sympathies of the whole army and of every police agent in Paris, would

have been the least bloodless that history has record of. I had certainly no such expectations. I was aware of the indignation with which only a few days previously the General had refused the offers of an officer of the garrison of Paris—now retired from the army—to lead his men on their usual *promenade militaire* up the Boulevard St. Germain, and, on reaching the Chamber of Deputies, to carry out a Boulangist Brumaire.

It is not with excessive virtue of civicism that revolutionaries can succeed. Robespierre did his best to teach people that lesson, and the executions of Danton and Camille Desmoulins afforded his most striking demonstrations. It has pleased Boulanger's adversaries to depict him as a coward. They said, and say, that the vision of the *peloton d'exécution*, ever before his eyes, inspired him with prudence. It is a calumny. The man was as brave as men are. He deluded himself with the belief that his enormous popularity would carry him as on a tidal wave to the shore which he desired to reach. He preferred to await this consummation rather than to force the game by an act of the slightest illegality. There was the strongest foundation for his belief. I was with him at the Hôtel du Louvre on March 28, after the sentence of the *conseil d'enquête* had been passed upon him removing him from his command, and was able to assure myself of the overwhelming indignation which this act had aroused all through France. Thousands of telegrams from every part of the territory of the Republic kept pouring in, and thousands of people presented themselves at the doors of the hotel to register their sympathy. That day the Government was terror-stricken. Rioting was expected, and it had been decided by the authorities that to call upon the army to help to quell them would be to provoke a military *pronunciamento*

in Boulanger's favour. The authorities had only the police to rely upon. As to the officers, up to the rank of major, every one was on Boulanger's side. The older men, being jealous of Boulanger's extraordinary popularity with the soldiers, approved rather of the Government's action. Among civilians, the bourgeoisie were against Boulanger; but the whole of the proletariat was with him to a man.

In April of the same year I paid a visit to Lille, which was the headquarters of the Boulanger electoral campaign for the Nord Department. I described the place at the time as "literally mad for Boulanger." The workmen, the poor, the oppressed, looked to the General as to a Messiah. I followed him on different occasions during his electioneering tours, and I witnessed sights which are only to be seen once in a century. The people, accustomed to neglect, to dupery, do not readily deliver themselves, body, soul, and hopes on this earth into one man's hands. But to Boulanger they did. Their confidence in him was without limits. Their enthusiasm for him attained the degree of mania. I have seen bearded and grimy miners burst into tears at the first sight of him. I have seen ragged women waving their babies above their head to acclaim him. His very boots were kissed in adulation. He represented to the poor the brave, strong, superhuman man who was at last about to win for them a little justice and a little hope. The very fact that the Socialist deputies had pronounced against him was the strongest reason why the proletariat believed in him. Here at least was a man who would keep his promises.

It was hoped by his adversaries that his defeat in his duel with Floquet would cover him with ridicule and turn the tide against him. Nothing of the kind happened. It added only to the popular enthusiasm that he had shed

his blood in the popular cause. For the rest there was indeed little ignominy in the defeat. With one or two others I witnessed the duel from the top of the wall which surrounded the park where it was fought. Neither Boulanger nor Floquet knew anything about the use of the rapier. Boulanger followed the tactics which he had announced he should adopt, and the result was what had been foretold. "As soon," he had said, "as the words, 'Allez, messieurs,' are pronounced, I shall charge the enemy." "And get yourself run through the body." "Nous verrons." And we saw it. Boulanger charged and Floquet retreated. The ground was wet and slippery. In his precipitate backward retreat Floquet tripped up, and fell into a sitting position on a bush. Boulanger slipped about the same time. Floquet was sitting in the bush holding his sword with both hands, the pommel pressed against his bulky paunch, and the point sticking up in the air. In his fall Boulanger spitted his neck on this point. He might easily have been killed.

It was not his defeat by Floquet, it was not the scathing denunciations of Ferry, who called him a "Saint-Arnaud de café-concert," it was not the opposition of the upper classes of the bourgeoisie and the antagonism of the professional Socialists which broke his splendid fortunes. It was not even the disquiet that was aroused in the hearts of the masses when he became the darling of the duchesses and was seen by the bare-footed driving in gorgeous vehicles, when his indiscreet friends, anticipating events, allotted amongst themselves the charges of the new Court, and the ineffable Chincolle was heard to promise to this lady a *fauteuil*, to that one a *tabouret*. Boulanger was in the wrong when he went away. It was a simple demonstration of the truth of an old saying.

The putting of him to flight has often been spoken of as a masterpiece of diplomacy on the part of Constans. It was reported that one day, when the Minister of the Interior was expecting the visit of a man whom he knew to be affiliated to the Boulanger party, he left on his table, well in view, warrants for the arrest of Boulanger, Rochefort, and other leaders of the party. The man came, was allowed to remain in the room alone for a sufficient length of time, and as soon as he could get away tore post haste to Passy, and informed the General that he had not a moment to spare if he wished to avoid arrest, the Haute Cour, and the *peloton d'exécution* by flight.

I was assured by the Marquis de Morés, who was always exceptionally well informed, that the real way in which Constans procured the flight of Boulanger was by bribing Madame de Bonnemain. Here are Morés's own words on the subject: "That was another of Constans's master-strokes. He bribed Madame de Bonnemain, Boulanger's female companion, to use her influence with the weak General to get him to commit a series of blunders, beginning with the flight to Belgium and ending with his journey to Belgium, all of which have so disgusted his former supporters." Morés was the very last man in the world who would wilfully have slandered any woman, and it is quite possible that his version was the correct one. If that be so, it only makes it more deplorable that it was for the regret for such a woman that Boulanger should have put an end to his days. His suicide was looked upon as an act of cowardice by his warmest supporters. The people felt that they had been deserted for a woman. "Se tuer pour une femme" is what they say if one speaks of him now, as though that were the most absurd thing that a man could do.



As a daily chronicler during some years of the Boulanger episode, I can felicitate myself on having accurately read the pulse of France from the very first. In the early days I predicted the astonishing height of popularity to which he would ascend, to the extent indeed that my editor in America refused to accept my predictions. One day I received a peremptory cable from New York asking me "to give us a rest with Boulanger." Later on, after his flight, when I told them in New York that a definite rest could be given to the General as a factor in modern history, they again doubted. However, my time came when, on the eve of the September elections in 1890, I telegraphed a forecast of the election, and said that the only thing that was absolutely certain was that Boulanger would not have a majority at the polls. The next day confirmed my prediction, and I had the satisfaction of being the only correspondent in Paris who was able to announce the real meaning of the way the voting had gone that Sunday. The following are the headlines which were prefixed to my cable despatch, which was published the next morning in New York:

## **BOULANGER ROUTED.**

**He Did Not Succeed Yesterday in His  
Expectation of Smashing France's  
Government.**

## **A NOTABLY QUIET ELECTION.**

**Neither Riot Nor Serious Disorder Reported  
Anywhere.**

**THE TEST VOTE AT MONTMARTRE.**

For the Marquis de Morés I had a very sincere admiration and great affection. Who that has read the *Trois Mousquetaires* but has wished in his heart that it might have been his lot to meet the gallant d'Artagnan? Morés was a d'Artagnan amongst aristocrats. He was as brave as he was handsome, he was as gentle as he was brave. I had for him a hero-worship of which I am not ashamed, and his death was one of the tragedies of my life. That he was good to me and a friend was all the more remarkable in that he had a very sincere detestation of the English. I made his acquaintance just after he had returned to Paris from Toulouse, where he had been arrested on a charge of attempted murder during the disturbances which arose from his opposition to the election of Monsieur Constans. I think that if I give here in his own words his account of what had taken place, it will afford a good insight into one side of his character. This is what the Marquis told me about his adventures at Toulouse :

“ I am a personal enemy of Monsieur Constans, and I have been so for the past five years. When in Cochin-China I made friends with a man who was at that time Governor-General of Tongking, a certain Monsieur Richaud. He was disliked and feared by Monsieur Constans. Hence Constans's enmity to me. He served me out, as you know, by opposing my schemes for constructing a railway on the Chinese frontier and finally rejecting my plan. I wanted to pay him out in turn. When the general elections came on, I went to Toulouse with the express purpose of opposing the election of Monsieur Constans, as member for that city. On the very first day that I was there the police received orders to arrest me at all costs and under any pretext. In spite of this I continued my work of opposition. I had such

proofs of the tricks of the Minister's partisans and of their intentions to "fake" the election, that I engaged a fighting army of two hundred men, and let it be known publicly that I should see that no nonsense took place at the ballot-boxes, or that we should show fight. My men had instructions from me to rush the whole concern out of the window of the voting-room on the slightest sign of trickery. Monsieur Constans, on the other hand, through his agents, engaged three hundred ruffians, including many *mouchards*. These were paid to interrupt my meetings and thus to give, on the first opportunity, a pretext for arresting me.

"On Saturday, October 5, we had organized great meetings in one of the public halls of the town. Monsieur Constans had been invited to attend, and we had promised to see that he should be respected. He did not come, however. But about nine o'clock, just as I was addressing the meeting, the Constans gang came along outside and began beating "La Générale" on their drums. This was the signal of attack. At the same time these fellows began to storm the meeting-room. The windows were smashed in with bludgeons, and the riot was so great that it was impossible for me to continue speaking. I therefore went out into the street accompanied by my men, who were armed with sticks. At the door I saw that the crowd of Monsieur Constans's ruffians were so menacing that with the object of showing them that I intended to stand no nonsense, I drew my revolver and walked along, holding it in my hand. I had not gone three paces before four men sprang on me and arrested me. One of these men was a policeman in uniform. I therefore made no resistance, but asked the constable why I was being arrested. He replied that it was because I had drawn

my revolver. Just then one of the crowd lunged at me with a spike at the end of a stick. He missed me, however, but wounded one of the four fellows who were hauling me off.

"I was taken to prison, and in direct violation of the law, which ordains that during election-time tribunals shall be permanently in session, was kept in gaol for two days. On Sunday I insisted on being told on what charge I was being held. I was told that it was on a charge of wilful murder against a police officer—a charge which, in France, might entail the death penalty. It has since come to my knowledge that on that very same Sunday the Prefect of the department sent for the magistrate who was to try my case, and told him that if he did not treat me with all the rigour of the law he would run the risk of getting bounced from his post. The magistrate in question dared the Prefect to make that statement before witnesses, and added that he should act as he thought right and just and not otherwise. When my trial came off, a day or two ago, the charge of attempted murder was abandoned. Monsieur Constans having been successful in getting elected could afford to be merciful. The other charge was, however, vigorously supported by a number of false witnesses, who lied in a shameful manner. Their case was, however, too weak, and the trial resulted in my being fined four pounds."

Six years previously the Marquis had been tried at Bismarck, in Dakota, for the murder of a man called Luffey, *alias* Luftus Riley, *alias* Luffsey, one of a gang of horse thieves and desperadoes whose enmity he had incurred by the war he had waged upon them. On June 26, 1883, the thieves surrounded his house, and a desperate fight took place, during which Luffey

fell mortally wounded. The Marquis could not say whether he or which of his men had fired the fatal shot, but it was the Marquis who was held responsible for the killing of the man, and took his trial for murder. It lasted seventeen days, and in the end he was acquitted.

It often occurred to me, though, that the thought that he had killed a man haunted the Marquis's mind, and that he was not a happy man after that fatal day. He was an absolutely dead shot. On the eve of his duel in Belgium with Camille Dreyfus he told me exactly what he was going to do to his man. "I shall let him fire first," he said, "and then, unless he puts me *hors de combat*, I shall fire just as he is dropping his pistol arm and break it for him. I will put a stop for a while to his writing impudent libels about me." And that is exactly what he did. Camille Dreyfus had attacked the Marquis in the *Radical* for his professions of Anti-Semitism. The phrase which provoked the Marquis's cartel was to the effect that a man who had married a Jewess ought not to spit on the Jew-father's beard. The devoted Marquise de Morés was a daughter of Mr. Louis von Hoffmann, the banker, of New York.

Morés used to carry a loaded stick, with a ball of iron filled with lead, weighing over twenty pounds, as the knob. He called it his "training stick," and he said that it kept his wrist in good form. It was a little joke of his on first meeting a man to ask him to hold his stick for him, and he used to laugh when the weight of it pulled the man's hand down. I saw him very often, and frequently accompanied him to political meetings. He was a most eloquent speaker. I remember that once he had appointed me to fetch him in a club brougham from the Cercle Royale, but when I got there I was told he was playing



écarté. I was asked to come for him an hour later. However, the party lasted all that night and late into the next day. I do not think, though, that he was habitually a gambler. One day he left at my house a cutting from a New York paper, with a huge note of interrogation written upon it in blue pencil. It was a cable despatch of mine in which the foreign sub-editor had expanded a line saying that I had met the Marquis and that he had been very ill, into a statement that the Marquis, worn out with debauch, might be considered as played out. I immediately wrote to him to say that, being a rabid Anti-Semite, he must not expect much mercy at the hands of the Jewish sub-editors, and I enclosed my carbon copy of the original cablegram. His Anti-Semitism, I think, proceeded from the fact that on more than one occasion, both in Cochin-China and in America, he had been beaten in commercial undertakings by Jewish financiers. It will be remembered that it was he who, when Barney Barnato came to Paris in connection with the floating of some of his companies, brought a gang of men to the Place Vendôme and forced Barnato to flee from the Bristol Hotel.

One day after I had been lunching with him and the Comte de Mun at the house of the Marquis de Breteuil, and as Breteuil and I were walking with him up the Rue Royale, he suddenly hurried us down the Rue St. Honoré. We had been walking to the Jockey Club, and Breteuil asked what was the meaning of this *échappée à gauche*. "Didn't you see Hirsch coming along?" he said. "He is with ——, and he would have taken my salute to —— as partly intended for him, and would have returned my bow. It would be a pretty spectacle, would it not, the Marquis de Morés and the Baron von Hirsch exchanging bows?"

I am wondering whether I ought to mention, amongst the princes and potentates whom I have known, the notorious L—— - W——, who is at present in a Belgian gaol. When I was brought into contact with him, he had just distinguished himself in the following way: he had become engaged to be married to Mademoiselle F——, the daughter of the Consul-General of one of the southern monarchies. His real character was not then known to the girl's father, although that gentleman appreciated the fact fully that it is an expensive luxury to call a prince son-in-law. L—— - W——, however, did not think that the Consul had been sufficiently liberal in the way of marriage settlements, or, perhaps, he saw a way of getting a considerable sum in ready cash. The fact remains that, after the civil wedding at the *mairie*, he went to his father-in-law, and having concocted some story to account for his urgent need of the sum, demanded £4,000. The Consul answered that he had already paid quite enough for the honour of seeing his daughter Princess of L—— - W——. The Prince insisted, a quarrel arose, and finally the young man went off swearing that unless the money were paid him before the morrow, he should not attend the religious service at the Madeleine. The money was not sent, the Prince did not come, and the poor bride had to return home, married in the eyes of the law, but in the eyes of the Catholic Church and her own unwedded. A stormy scene ensued between the Consul and the Prince, for the girl's father rushed to the young man's rooms to have an explanation. It was reported that a bout of fisticuffs took place. After that L—— - W—— disappeared from Paris, and for quite a long time one used to meet in society the girl who was married, but who was not a wife. She used to be known as Mademoiselle ——. The great

difficulty in the way of a solution of the matter was that her family, being staunch Catholics, could not refer to the courts to dissolve the civil marriage. In the end release came from Rome, and permission was granted to the girl to sue for divorce, to unloosen by civil remedy a civil tie. The Prince, whose name figured in the *Almanac de Gotha*, soon developed into one of the most notorious criminals in Europe.

Of matrimonial difficulties between American girls who had married foreign princes or noblemen I was a constant spectator for years, and I have never ceased to impress upon American readers the folly and risks of such marriages, in which the young brides, victims of their own foolish ambitions, are plundered, ill-used, and abandoned for mistresses kept on their fathers' dollars. I remember one case, however, where an American girl of great wealth was saved by her business instincts from a marriage which would certainly have been an unhappy one. This was Miss C——, of Philadelphia. She had become engaged to the late Prince Murat, who was many years her senior, and who was marrying again because the gambling-table had almost entirely ruined him.

On the eve of the marriage, as is the custom in France, the marriage contract was read in public at the bride's house. After various clauses describing the vast wealth which was being brought into the marriage by Miss C——, the notary came to the clause dealing with the allowance of pin-money which was to be made out of the settlement to the Prince. Miss C—— had fixed this at two thousand pounds a year. When Murat heard the figure he went scarlet with indignation. Springing from his chair, he signed to the lawyer to stop his reading, and, walking up to his bride, cried out in presence of all

the company assembled : "Surely, madame, this is a joke ! You cannot be in earnest in treating your prospective husband with such suspicion ?" Miss C——, in a very cool, business-like tone, reminded the Prince that ever since the question of marriage was first mooted between them, she had declared that she would keep the management of her millions in her own hands. "Prince," she added, "I have managed my fortune all along with success, and I wish to continue to do so. As for you, you have shown that you do not know how to manage money." "If you are indeed in earnest," said Murat, "all I can say is that fifty thousand francs a year might be a sufficient allowance for your *maître-a'hôtel*, but is certainly not enough for your husband." With these words he walked out of the room, nor did he omit to slam the door violently behind him, leaving the wedding-party in consternation.

Miss C—— would not give way, and on the other hand the Prince's daughter-in-law, who had not at all relished the prospect of there being another Princess Murat, offered to allow her father-in-law the fifty thousand francs a year if he would forego the marriage. But not only the Prince's daughter-in-law, who was the granddaughter of the great Marshal Ney, and who possessed great social power and influence in Paris, violently opposed the match ; so also did the whole of the Murat and Bonaparte families. I remember that Princess Mathilde spoke out in no ambiguous language against such a *mésalliance*. Miss C——, whose conduct I immensely admired throughout, never moved from the position she had taken up. After the rupture at the reading of the contract, she informed the Prince that her offer would remain open for a fortnight. During that period the promised spouses frequently met outside, but

the Prince used to pass the lady with no sign of recognition. When the fortnight had elapsed, Miss C—— took cabins for herself and her suite, and departed for America, leaving Murat to find a less wealthy but also less prudent princess.

At about the same time there was another prince of high lineage in the matrimonial market, a French prince—dead since—bearing a historic name. He had long been known to us as a loafer in the bars and *cafés*. He was an elderly man and a very shabby one, and one dreaded meeting him, for he was as persistent as Coppée's *vieux Polonais* in levying five-franc pieces. One day, however, he turned up dressed in new clothes from head to foot. He did not offer to pay off his debts, but at any rate he was able to discharge his drinking-bill at the *café* that night without recourse to others. It appeared that the wife of a rich tailor had long had her eye on the destitute Prince, and as her husband was dying she had made up her mind that if money could effect her purpose she would become Madame la Princesse. As soon as the tailor was dead, and indeed before the breath was well out of his body, she sent her lawyer to the garret where the Prince de —— was living, and made him an offer of marriage. He greedily accepted the offer; an allowance was at once settled on him by his prospective wife, and *carte blanche* was given him to fit himself out at the shop. The widow kept him in luxury until the proper time of mourning for her first husband had elapsed, and then married him. I do not know whether the marriage was a happy one or not, but I do not fancy that the Princess saw much of his company. He seemed to spend his time between the American bar at the Grand Hotel and one or other of the clubs where they play



baccarat. He assumed an attitude of great haughtiness towards his former acquaintances. Not one of them dared to remind him of the trifling loan accounts that were outstanding.

This scullion amongst princes reminds me by contrast of a prince amongst cooks. I refer to the late Joseph, Joseph the immortal, of Joseph's restaurant in Paris and of the Savoy Hotel in London. He had long been known to the gourmets of polite society as the *chef* at Paillard's in the Chaussée d'Antin, but what made his name world famous was the news that he had been engaged as cook by Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt at a salary of ten thousand dollars a year. That was in March, 1887. I remember calling on Monsieur Joseph Dugnol. He used to live in a small apartment in the Rue des Jeûneurs—a queer address certainly for a man who catered for the gourmandise of the nations.

His wife was much opposed to the voyage to America. "No good could come of it," she said. Joseph told me that day that he was not going to America as a cook, that he spurned the designation. "I am," he said, "a gastronomical director." New York was hugely amused at my cable in which I made this announcement. Vanderbilt's acquisition became the talk of the town. Unfortunately the attention of the Immigration Bureau was attracted, and when Joseph and his family arrived an attempt was made to detain him as imported labour. Vanderbilt, however, was able to dispose of that difficulty.

Some days after my visit to the Rue des Jeûneurs, Joseph called at my house and told me his story. He had been cook in the kitchens of the Palace in Berlin under old Emperor William. "It used to break my heart," he said, "when the Kaiser sent back my

magnificent fancy dishes untouched, and would eat nothing but plain food. I was miserable in the royal kitchens." Speaking of how Vanderbilt came to engage him, he said: "Mr. Vanderbilt came to the Café Bignon one day, and I served him a nice little dinner of three courses. He said: 'You must come to New York with me.' I said that I could not, and the matter dropped for a while. Then he came back one day with his wife, and asked me to cook him a wild duck. You know my speciality, the *canard sauvage à la presse*. After dinner the subject of my going to America was again broached, and this time he offered such liberal terms that I could refuse no longer. I am to report at Mr. Vanderbilt's house in New York on April 1. I owe my success to having learned to please the stomach through the imagination. A man can only eat a small quantity at one meal, and it is a mistake to set before him a bill of fare which overloads his stomach and surfeits him. A soup, an *entrée*, and one other dish, that is my dinner, with a few airy trifles to complete it. I learned simplicity in Emperor William's kitchen. I please the refined palate by giving simple fare delicately cooked. The few ingredients necessary to qualify each dish are brought into high relief. Each dish must be so tastefully prepared as to appeal to the eye and not to fatigue the stomach—that's the secret of successful cooking. Mr. Blaine once made me an offer to go out to America with him, but it was a half-hearted offer, and he did not hold out sufficient inducements."

He then said that he could show me how for a trifling cost an exquisite dish could be made, and sent my servant out to fetch him two halfpenny oranges and a penny bunch of violets. He transformed the two oranges into dainty little *paniers*, which he decorated

as to their handles with violets. The pulp of the orange he scooped out, pressed the juice into a cup, mixed it with sugar, and added to it a few drops of liqueur. "Put that into a freezing safe for a few minutes," he said, "and you have at the cost of three half-pence each a *panier à la Sevigné*, or *à la* anything else, for which a fashionable *restaurateur* could charge a shilling at least. Whilst he was deftly preparing this *entremets*, he was telling me of a fight he once had with the gloves with the late Marquis of Queensberry, "in which," he said, "I proved to his Grace that a skilful French boxer can soon knock a Britisher out of time." He told me that besides boxing, and all other kinds of athletics, he was very fond of waltzing and greatly interested in astronomy.

His visit to New York was not a success. He soon returned to Europe. "The psychology of Monsieur Vanderbilt and my own," he explained, "are not the same." His restaurant was not very successful. He told me that to start a first-class restaurant in Paris with any chances of success, a man must be prepared to sink at least ten thousand pounds in his wine-cellar. He was hampered by want of capital, and so eventually accepted an offer from the Savoy Hotel. Here he earned a large sum of money, and after some years returned to Paris to develop his restaurant. But then he fell ill and died. His estate exceeded one hundred thousand pounds, every penny of which he had earned with his spits and spoons. He was a wonderful little man and I felt his loss. I used to address him as *cher maître*; and indeed many of the things that I know about gastronomy and wines I owe to the lessons he used to give me while I was dining at his restaurant.

Joseph, in his way, was an apostle of the simple

life. He stood for simplicity in luxury. He cultivated the gourmet and abhorred the gourmand. Brillat-Savarin, the magistrate and epicure, would have taken him to his bosom. It was in the irony of Fate that he should have been cut off in his prime. Such cooking as his should have led him to extreme old age. In which connection, one word about Monsieur Eugène Chevreul, the savant, whose acquaintance I made that same year, when he was one hundred and two years old. He told me that he attributed his longevity to the moderation of his eating and drinking. "And," he said, "I think that I have found the secret of eternal youth in the plate of bouillon, which I take every night for my last meal. It is just *pot-au-feu* soup, with vermicelli in it, and to this I add a spoonful of grated Gruyère cheese. I consider this my most wonderful discovery. It is the ideal nourishment. It feeds and it stimulates."

I have often wondered why it is impossible in England to obtain the delicious *pot-au-feu* bouillon which is the staple of the French table. It is easy of preparation, and it is indeed, as old Monsieur Chevreul said, an ideal food, when added to in the way he described. Amongst soups it is incontestably the first.\*

\* My housekeeper, who has a city reputation for the excellence of her *pot-au-feu*, gives me the following recipe for its preparation. One quart of water should be allowed for every pound of meat. The best meat for the purpose is from the hind-hock of the ox. An earthenware pot, or *marmite*, is preferable, but an iron saucepan can be used just as well. The meat is to be put into the water cold, with a sufficiency of salt. Let it boil and then skim as long as scum rises. You then add the vegetables. There should be a quarter of a pound of mixed vegetables to every pound of meat. The vegetables to be used are carrots, leeks, onions, and one turnip. For seasoning add at the same time a clove, a small pod of garlic, and a little bouquet of celery and parsley tied together. Use no pepper. The bouillon should

I must not conclude my list of princes and potentates without mentioning the name of Marquis and General Tcheng-Ki-Tong, for some time *chargé d'affaires* at the Imperial Chinese Embassy in Paris. Tcheng-Ki-Tong was a Parisianized Oriental of a very peculiar type. He was a man of literary tastes, and contributed largely on Chinese subjects to the leading French papers. He was the author of a number of books on Chinese questions. At the same time he was ardently attached to the pleasures of the capital. It was said of him, after his disgrace, that tucking up his pig-tail under his hat, and in European costume, he used to attend the public halls and dance as wildly the cancan as any Valentin-le-Désossé of them all. He got into trouble on a charge of raising money on the security of his Government without authority. A London newspaper was mainly responsible for the campaign which ended in his recall. There was a time when his friends in Paris had grave reasons to fear for poor Tcheng-Ki-Tong. It was announced that he had been entrapped into returning to Peking, and that there anything but a cordial welcome awaited him. A Chinese official with whom I conversed on the subject of his probable destiny said that it was very likely that, as his personal safety had been promised to him before he returned home, he would be appointed to the governorship of some remote province, and that he would never be heard of again after once he had set off to reach his seat of government.

“Il y a des bandits et des assassins partout,” said

boil on a slow fire for five hours. Then remove the meat and pass the bouillon through a strainer. In France some of the vegetables are sometimes served with the soup or are eaten with the meat, as a separate dish. But with that I have nothing to do.



the Chinaman who was speaking to me, and his eyes twinkled at the thought how cunningly the trap had been baited. But in the matter of wiliness, Tcheng-Ki-Tong was more than a match for his adversaries. He escaped all dangers and became the righthand man of Li-Hung-Tchang. I had excellent accounts of him, during a visit to Stockholm, from Sven Hedin, the Swedish traveller, who had dined with him at Li-Hung-Tchang's table in Peking. He rose to great wealth and honours, and may yet be seen once more in great splendour on the boulevards which he loved so well.

I often used to call on him at the Embassy, and while we talked of literature he used to regale me on Chinese tea, which was scented with all kinds of fragrant blossoms, and which was of the colour of palest amber. With the tea he used to hand me a Chinese pipe, from which one drew one whiff, and no more, and which had to be filled and lighted again for a second draw. I translated into English one of his books on life and customs in China, and gained for the while a reputation as an erudite Oriental linguist. The patent fact that the book had been translated from the French was overlooked. In no dissimilar way are reputations often made. Whilst I was working at this book we were constantly together, and I conceived much regard for the kindness and cleverness of the man

## CHAPTER XIX

The Foreign Correspondent—"News, not Soul-throb"—Yellow Journalism—A Cable from Keats—The Fascination of the Work—The Precariousness of Position—On collecting "Personals"—Shadowing a Millionaire—Jules Verne and Nelly Bly—My Friendship with Jules Verne—The Paris Correspondent to English Papers—The Fight against Anonymity—The Jealousy of Colleagues—A Remonstrance with Zola—American and English Correspondence Contrasted—Wanted, the Power of Prophecy—How I missed a High Honour.

IT was by mere accident that having come to Paris to lead a life devoted to literature and to study, and to seek the companionship and instruction of the great minds in the capital of the world's intellect, I was drawn into the vortex of journalism. I had had no training for this life; my sympathies were altogether elsewhere; I was at home rather in the study than in the ante-chambers of notoriety; it has, indeed, always been only by a strong effort that I have been able to bring myself to those acts of importuning others which the profession of reporter exacts. For the foreign correspondent is, in the first place, a reporter. He may object to the qualification; he may point out that he is a political writer, that theatrical and literary criticism come within the range of his duties, and that as a chronicler of the modes and diversions of the highest society he is essentially a man of the world. All that is true, but the fact remains that he is, or should be, *in primis*, a reporter of news, and I attribute such success as I attained in my career to the

fact that I always kept this truth well before my eyes. It was Mr. Pulitzer, of the *New York World*, who impressed the fact upon me that a "nose for news" is the foremost qualification of the successful journalist. The astonishing heights of power and wealth to which my first preceptor has raised himself from mediocre beginnings invest his teaching with peculiar value.

One day, some years after my first arrival in Paris as a resident, I fell into conversation in a *café* in the Rue de Castiglione with an American gentleman, who informed me in the course of his remarks that he was the London correspondent of a great American daily. He asked me what my profession was, and when I told him that I was a writer, he expressed a desire to see some specimens of my work. That evening I showed him one of my scrap-books. He examined its contents carefully, and, said he: "Well, yes, the spelling and the grammar seem all right. But," he added, "it's news, and not soul-throb, that we desiderate." He then asked me if I would care to act as correspondent in Paris for his journal. The novelty of the suggestion attracted me; the inducements held out were tempting, and that evening I found myself invested with the title and dignity of Paris correspondent. I remember that the very next day I was reminded how little vanity I could derive from the appointment. I was at a big dinner-party at a house in the Parc Monceau Quarter, and during the course of the evening my friend Coquelin cadet, the actor, introduced me to a lady, the Comtesse de T——, as Paris correspondent of the —— ——. "So delighted to make your acquaintance," she said, and, fibbing, added: "Monsieur Coquelin has told me of your great talents as a journalist." "Yes, madame," I said, "I spell quite satisfactorily." At that dinner-party there were present a number of most

distinguished people, actors, writers, painters, and financiers. Amongst the guests was a lady who had acted as professor of music at Sandringham. When on the following morning I told the London correspondent of the dinner-party, and about the people who had been present, he said that he hoped that I had taken advantage of the fact that I had sat next to the music mistress of the royal princes and princesses to get a good "story" of what went on at Sandringham. When I told him that I had done nothing of the sort, he shook his head, and said that he feared that he had been mistaken in me.

I remember that directly after receiving this appointment, I was in negotiation for a room on the seventh floor of a house in the Rue de Castiglione. I had still the romantic idea that the profession of letters is best pursued in a garret. The proprietress of the house was a very old lady who prided herself on her likeness to Queen Amélie, and who dressed in such a way as to heighten the resemblance. Before making out the lease, she asked me my profession, and when I told her that I had become a journalist she at first refused to have me as a tenant. "Our house has always been a quiet one. I should not like my tenants to be disturbed." I did not take her meaning until she continued that the only condition on which she would let me her room was that a clause should be inserted into the lease to the effect that I undertook at no time to erect a printing-press in the apartment. I mention this incident as it illustrates in a curious manner the idea which certain bourgeois in Paris still hold of the meaning of the word journalist.

The London correspondent's remarks on what ought to have been my preoccupation during the dinner-party to which I had been invited as an ordinary guest gave me a disquieting suggestion of what might be expected

of me as a correspondent to the paper in question. I should explain that, as I afterwards learned, this particular paper was one of the pioneers of that new journalism which later became known as the "Yellow Journalism." "We are a democratic paper," so the proprietor explained to me when we met, "and what we want is to tomahawk these aristocrats." I came to appreciate the fact that by "aristocrats" was implied any and everybody who by reason of talents, or wealth, or social position might be supposed to excite the envy of the masses, and that the policy of the paper was to ingratiate itself with the mob by pandering to this basest of passions. I need hardly say that at no time did I lend myself to work of this kind, and persistently refused to execute such orders as were sometimes sent me either direct from headquarters or from the London office as revolted my sense of what was fair and decent.

Amongst such orders was one which particularly excited my indignation. A letter reached me from the London office telling me that a certain famous and beautiful actress was about to be clandestinely confined in Paris, and ordering me to find out all about the matter, and to cable two columns direct to New York. I telegraphed back that if the lady desired her confinement to be clandestine, it was probably because she did not want the public to know anything about it. On another occasion I was sitting in the pine-forest near Cap Breton reading Keats, when the old woman who carried telegrams in that village came labouring up to me with a blue envelope in her hand. I opened it, and found that it was a request from a New York editor that I would "cover" a grand "story" of which they had just received a "pointer." Some millionaire, it appeared,



who had disappeared from New York, was then known to be living *en faux ménage* in Paris. What was desired of me, apparently, was that I should go to Paris, rout out the details of this squalid story, and publish the disgrace of the man and the woman to the world. A large sum of money had been cabled to my credit at a bank at Bayonne to cover all the expenses of this unworthy undertaking. It seemed to me then as though there had come upon me in the midst of the beautiful surroundings in which I had been resting some loathsome animal. "Mother Lacoste," I said to the old woman, "how dare you bring me messages like this?" A few minutes later she was returning to the village with a telegraphic message from me to New York, which I had copied, or rather adapted, from the poem I had been reading when I was interrupted:

There is *a* mid-forest laugh,  
Where *low* — gives the half  
To some wight, amazed to hear  
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

Whenever on future occasions my name was mentioned in that paper in New York, it was with the prefix "the outrageous."

Even the ordinary routine work of collecting "personals," *i.e.* items of personal information about prominent Americans on a visit to Paris, which forms an important part of the American correspondent's duties, is to a person who is at all sensitive extremely unpleasant work. To force oneself upon strangers, to pester them with prying and impertinent questions, it was work which I could not do, which I never tried to do. Had it not been that, thanks to my extensive relations amongst prominent people in Paris, I could always be relied upon for other news, less important perhaps to the Yellow editor, but

still unobtainable elsewhere, my connection with that class of paper would not have been a long one. It may be wondered why, having such scruples, I did not at once resign a position which involved such duties. Well, in the first place, I never did violate my feeling of what was decent; and in the second place, the other work had for me an intense fascination. I know few satisfactions greater than those which I used to experience any morning after I had sent off some big piece of news, in the feeling that a whole city, thousands and thousands of miles away, was agog with what I had written; that all New York or San Francisco or Chicago was discussing what would not be known to the public in Paris until the agencies had cabled my information back to Europe. One is lying in bed quietly smoking cigarettes and sipping one's coffee, and through one's agency, by reason of something that one did but a few hours previously, in places thousands of miles over stormy seas, the words, the thoughts, the very actions of hundreds of thousands of men and women are being controlled. It is the most imperial sensation of power that can come to any man.

It was not the fault of one's editor if one was not always kept up to a pitch of frenzy in the collection of news. The American correspondent is always on weekly salary, and liable to dismissal at a moment's notice. One of my editors held it as his firm opinion that there was no better moral tonic for a correspondent who was getting negligent than a "year's holiday without salary." After a period of want, he opined, the man would come back with energy much renewed and faculties considerably sharpened. No past services are ever taken into consideration. The balance between you and your employer is struck once a week, when your draft is forwarded. I remember how this was impressed

upon me by the way in which the London correspondent of an American paper—who for years had done faithful service to his employers—was “ fired ” one day from the London office. He had missed some item of news, and had received that morning a sharp rebuke by cable from the proprietor, who was then wintering in San Francisco. He cabled back : “ Can’t be expected to cover Europe from the top of a penny ’bus.” In the course of the afternoon a reply-cable came from San Francisco, “ You can climb down off that penny ’bus.” That same evening another correspondent, who had probably been dining at Lockhart’s that day, took over the office, and my ex-chief passed from an income of £25 a week to no income at all, to be reinstated with a reduced sense of his own importance after some months of the moral tonic course.

As opposed to the penalties to be expected for negligence, there was a suggestion that exceptionally good service would bring with it special rewards. I may say that I never received any such encouragements. I have no diamond rings to display as tokens of successful “ beats.” Yet I had imagined that when I enabled my editor to be alone in publishing the true result of the General Elections in France in 1889, when Boulanger and his party were routed, I should receive some recognition. “ Not being an American,” I was told, “ you can have no idea what little importance we attach in the States to European politics.” I might have answered that if that were the case I did not understand why for weeks previously I had been bombarded with letters and telegrams from the London office urging on me the importance of “ covering ” these elections thoroughly. Nor did the beat I secured over the Zola trial, when the news of his conviction reached my paper

one hour before any other journal received it, elicit more from the London agent of the paper than a complaint about the amount which had been spent in securing that service.

In spite of these drawbacks there can be no doubt that the training thus acquired is for any man who desires to follow the profession of journalism a most valuable one. I think that the best proof that I can give of that is that every one of the four young men who came to me as assistants, with no other qualifications than that of being able to write shorthand, were able at once on leaving me to find excellent positions on the press. One of them was quite recently filling the "chair" of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*; another holds an important post in London, and a third, having struck out an independent line, is a well-known Parisian contributor to London magazines. On the last gentleman the teaching was not thrown away, that in dealing with American editors it is always a good thing to have more than one string to one's bow. He passed from my house to the *New York Herald*, and after having worked there for two years, obtained permission to go to England to get married. On his return to Paris with his young wife, the first news that greeted him on reaching the office was that he was dismissed. No reason for this step was given him, and but for the fact that he had been prepared for the possibility of an act so arbitrary, he might have found himself in the same position as the one from which I once rescued another American journalist. This man, having been dismissed at a week's notice, and having no resources but his weekly salary, found himself absolutely destitute in Paris. He was obliged to leave his hotel without paying his bill and without his luggage,

and but that I was able to afford him shelter and hospitality for some weeks, it is difficult to say what would have become of him. I will not complete the story by relating what return he made me. It will be sufficient perhaps to say that he made me the usual return.

The movements of millionaires in Paris were considered by the Yellow editors news items of paramount importance. I was in this way brought into contact with many of the richest men in the States. I invariably found them affable and obliging, although they usually made me understand that they were at a loss to know why the public should be particularly interested in them. One of the most courteous and delightful old gentlemen whom I have ever met I encountered in this way, John Jacob Astor. The people at the Bristol Hotel had standing orders to give me immediate access to him whenever I called. We used to laugh at the absurdity of the business which had first brought us together.

Before I made his acquaintance I had been forced by the head European correspondent of the paper which I was then representing to do what I had considered a very unpleasant piece of work in connection with him. "See here," my superior had said, "I'll give you a good idea of a story which will fetch them in New York. Old John Jacob's at the Bristol. He can afford to spend thousands of dollars per diem. Now just you find out what he spends, say in two hours. Hang about the Place Vendôme until he comes out—he usually takes a toddle towards two o'clock; shadow him and make a note of every cent he spends. Then we'll figure out what he has saved on that two hours' outlay." I told my chief that I considered the "assignment" a most idiotic one, and a nasty piece of prying; but—



well. I was forced to do it. However, I relieved my conscience by telling Mr. Astor all about it when I came to know him. He was much amused. "Well, and what *did* I spend that day?" he asked with that smile which one likes to remember. "About thirty cents in the two hours," I said. "You bought a bouquet of violets outside the hotel, and a paper at the shop in the Rue de Castiglione, and then after a walk in the Tuileries you had a tuck-in at the confectioner's shop at the corner of the Rue de Rivoli." He then asked me what day it was, and when I told him he said, "You were fifty per cent. wrong in your calculations; for I remember that that afternoon, when I went into that shop in the Rue Castiglione, I paid thirty cents for this book of yours," producing a copy of a shilling edition of one of my stories. Then he turned grave, and, speaking in a kind and paternal manner, he said, "Look here, don't you think that it's a pity that a young man like you should be wasting your time in doing such silly work as that? Couldn't you find something better to do?"

An "assignment" of a somewhat foolish but amusing nature for an American paper with which I was at that time connected as Paris correspondent procured for me the advantage of the acquaintance of Jules Verne, which in a short time developed into much mutual goodwill. The proprietors of the journal in question had sent a girl reporter on a journey round the world, the point being to demonstrate that this could be effected in considerably less time than was occupied by Phineas Fogg, the hero of Verne's novel, *Round the World in Eighty Days*.

It was thought that it would give a good advertisement to the "story" if on her way through France to

Brindisi the girl could meet Jules Verne in Amiens. I was ordered to arrange the meeting. At first the old gentleman did not at all understand what purpose could be served by such a meeting, and it required some persuasion on my part to induce him to consent. The task was all the more difficult for me because I felt that we were taking advantage for our own purposes of his complacency. The meeting came off most successfully. The girl reached Calais in time to come to Amiens, see Verne, and return to Calais to take the Brindisi express. I had managed so to interest Verne in the scheme that he was good enough to come to the station at Amiens to meet the American reporter, bringing a bouquet with him to present to her.

From the station we drove to his house on the Boulevard Longueville, and spent about half an hour there. Verne could not believe that the slight young woman could possibly be going round the world all by herself. "Why, she looks a mere child," he said. But he warmed into interest in the venture, and I remember his asking me to tell the young woman that he considered that the journey would effect a good purpose. "It comes just at the right time," he said, "because fast as you undoubtedly will travel, it will call attention to the comparative want of communications for such a voyage. It should stir up the Russian Government to begin upon that trans-Siberian railway. When that is finished, mademoiselle, you will be able to beat the record, which I am convinced you are about to make for yourself, and to get round the world in forty-five days."

The voyage was accomplished in seventy-two days, and I was sent down to Amiens again to "interview" the novelist on the achievement. I dined with the

Vernes that evening, and my host opened a dusty bottle of Pontet-Canet with which to drink the health of the plucky young female journalist. He spoke that evening of working her into a story which he was then projecting, and which was to be called *Lady Franklin*. I do not remember whether he ever carried out his intention, but I fancy that after a while it occurred to him that he had only been brought into the affair for the sake of the advertisement which his name would give to the undertaking.

He did not receive one word of thanks from the editor of the paper for his kindness and civility. I repeatedly asked that a letter of thanks might be sent to him, but I was told that the "old man had got good advertising out of it and had no reason to complain." For the part I had played in the matter he bore no resentment against me, though I know he felt that he had not been treated with courtesy. I was with him only a few weeks before his death, and we were talking over old times, and he said that it was very strange that after he had served the purpose of the paper not a word of acknowledgment had been made to him.

It was certainly an absurd suggestion that he had acted in the matter from any spirit of self-interest, for there never was a less self-seeking man. I shall not forget my surprise when, one day in Paris, his son, Michel Verne, speaking to me about his father, told me that never in his life had he earned from his pen as much as a thousand pounds a year. I asked Jules Verne about this afterwards, when I was with him in Amiens, and he said that it was quite true. "I made an arrangement with my publishers many years ago to supply them with two novels every year for an annual

payment, which is certainly less than the sum you mention. Was it a good bargain or was it a bad one? I do not know. I may add that I do not care. If my publishers have done well out of the arrangement, *tant mieux*. Monsieur —— has always been most courteous and kind to me, and I wish him all prosperity." What concerned him far more was his literary reputation. He was delighted with the popularity which his books enjoyed abroad, and on that last occasion when I was with him he once more showed me a beautiful walking-stick which had been presented to him by the subscriptions of a number of English school-children. "This walking-stick," he said, "is, I may say, to parody the words of Monsieur Prud'homme, *le plus beau jour de ma vie*."

He felt greatly hurt at the indifference of French men of letters to his work. He had had ambitions at one time to take his seat in the French Academy. "Since then," he said to me, "the Academy has filled up every one of its seats afresh."

The last hour which I spent in his company was a sad one, although at that time I could not foresee that it was to be the last time that I should be with him. He was haunted with the fear of blindness. Yet, as he told me, he was sticking manfully to his work, and could hope to carry out his contract with his publishers to the very end. He told me that he had then completed nine or ten volumes, and could supply the annual demand for two volumes from his pen for five years to come. He wrote his name for me on a picture post-card likeness of himself before we parted. Years before he had written for me a preface to one of my books.

My work for the London papers was, if much less exciting than my American "assignments," decidedly

more pleasant. My training here stood me in good stead. In the *Pall Mall* under Stead and afterwards under Cust, in the *Westminster Gazette* under Cook, and in the *Daily Graphic* for three or four years from its commencement, I was able to do work which attracted attention. I abandoned the old, easy devices of correspondents. The person of "high official authority whose name must not be mentioned" never figured in my despatches, and I do not think that I once quoted from the "semi-official" this or that. When I had the "highest authority" for saying anything I gave it. Another innovation which I was able to introduce was that of signing my name to my articles, and I claim this from my brother workers, that I was the first to break down the unfair system of anonymity which used to be imposed on English writers to the press.

I remember, *à propos* of this, remonstrating with Zola when, previous to his visit to London, he told me that it was his intention to speak in favour of such anonymity. I asked him whether his *débuts* would not have been greatly delayed if the same constraint had been put upon him. "That never occurred to me," he said. "As you know, I am only going to England with the wish to please everybody, and I have been told that the general feeling over there is that newspaper articles should be anonymous. I don't want to set the newspapers against me." The reform is now general in England, mainly thanks to the fair-mindedness of Sir Alfred Harmsworth, but the initiation of it was not effected without sacrifices. Much remunerative work was refused by me because the rule of anonymity was imposed. On the other hand, certain of my *confrères* who had not the courage to follow my example, seemed



to think themselves personally injured by my conduct of my own affairs, and retaliated on me by setting afloat feeble calumnies concerning me.

In Paris, however, amongst literary people calumny is so common that it fails its purpose. Indeed, the man who does not hear with a certain regularity that he is being charged with continual infamy of conduct may begin to feel uneasy as to his position. The lesson which was taught by Alexandre Dumas on a famous occasion to his *valet-de-chambre* is one to be remembered. A man had written up in chalk on the front of Dumas's house some very offensive remark about him, and the valet, in high indignation, after effacing the libel, was about to give the man a thrashing, when Dumas, who had been looking on, cried out, “Leave him alone. Every little helps.”

It sometimes amuses me still to go into a certain *café* on the boulevards, where the minor correspondents meet with French *littérateurs*, and to listen to the abominable inventions which are passed round about the men who “have arrived.” I protest that I find the conversation of these men, whom Felicien Champsaur calls the “loups, renards, chats-pards de lettres,” more screamingly funny than a Palais-Royal farce, and wonder greatly that fellows so contemptible could ever have aroused my indignation.

For the rest, my business being with the Parisians, I avoided the society of my *confrères* and formed no acquaintances amongst the correspondents with the exception of one or two of the leading men. I had a slight acquaintance with Theodore Child, with Blowitz, and Sir Campbell Clarke; and when that prince amongst Paris correspondents, Richard Whiteing, was in Paris, I occasionally had the privilege of seeing him. But of

the society which used to collect in the bars and *cafés* I knew nothing except what echo brought to my ears. May these few words *pro domo* be excused me!

During all those years of active journalism I did not lose sight of the objects which I first had in view in coming to Paris, the pursuit of literature and the cultivation of the friendship of men and women of master minds. If in the last object my success far exceeded my most sanguine expectations, it was I had never hoped to find people so good and so gracious as the Parisians are towards those who take the trouble to find the way to their hearts.

It has always occurred to me that the life of the Englishman in Paris, who has no other resource than his salary as correspondent to an English newspaper, is one of the most precarious of existences. The salaries allowed are never more than sufficient to maintain him, and the more important the paper, and consequently the higher the remuneration, the more expenses he has to incur in keeping up appearances. He has no fixity of tenure.

Quite recently we have witnessed in Paris the removal from their posts of correspondents who might reasonably have hoped to have retained their employment as long as their power of work lasted. But newspapers are but commercial undertakings, and subject to the fluctuations of such. As to my own appointments, I used to inspire myself from the teachings of Mrs. Gamp, and took them as they came and as they went. One day a cable from New York would reduce my income by four or five hundred a year; another day would bring with the morning's post an ample compensation in the form of a better appointment on some other journal. As saving money out of such incomes as are received by Paris

correspondents is entirely out of the question, I cannot conceive how men who have no other resources than this income can manage to survive when it is taken from them, either by the whim of their employers or by the hazards of the fortunes of the paper which they have been representing. When retrenchment becomes necessary in a newspaper office the foreign correspondence is the first service that is sacrificed. It is, under the circumstances, highly creditable to foreign correspondents, as a class, that one so rarely hears of any effort being made by one of them to supplement his income or to provide for emergencies by transactions of a doubtful nature. In a few notorious cases which have occurred, the reprehension expressed has been general, and the offender has been made to feel by the open contempt of his colleagues with what sentiments his conduct has inspired them.

As compared to the life of the American correspondent, that of the English journalist in Paris is monotonous indeed. Inasmuch as little news about Paris and the Parisians is required from the Americans, and the doings of his travelling countrymen are of primary importance as news items, he is bound to no one place nor to any dismal routine of duties. He travels about France; he is ever on the look-out for something new. During the years when I acted for American papers in Paris, I visited most of the countries in Europe, and was brought into contact with all classes of men and women. For the English correspondent, on the other hand, year in year out, each month, almost each week, brings with it the same subjects, the same duties. Now that I am away from it all, with what relief can I watch the recurring functions of Parisian life, without having to vex my head to vary the *clichés* of description which have to be served up again and again! What new things could

I find to say of Réveillon, of New Year's Day in Paris, of the Concours Hippique, of Sarah Bernhardt's revival of *La Dame aux Camellias*, of the Quatorze Juillet, of the Rentrée—the very logograms of Parisian correspondence? And the salons! What a blessed relief no longer to be obliged to survey acres of dismal canvases and to have to write out once more the monotonous commonplaces about the painters, of whom alone, because of their established reputations, one is allowed to speak!

In another respect also the position of the American correspondent is a better one. He is given *carte blanche* in the matter of expenses. I have spent as much as £300 in one cable to New York. When I was travelling, £2 a day were allowed me for hotel expenses alone. If the item of news be a valuable one, there are absolutely no limits to what one may spend, first in securing it, and next in insuring its promptest transmittal to the head office. Such having been my experience, it will be understood with what amusement I once received instructions from a London office that, in order to reduce expenses, I was in future to write up events about to occur in a variety of manners in advance, and to number each version of the event that was about to happen with a distinguishing letter. After the event, I was to telegraph merely the distinguishing letter of the paragraph which most closely described the way matters had gone, so that the news could be printed from the copy already in hand. I was forced to reply that both imagination and time would fail me for such prophetic labours.

Independence of opinion is not encouraged in the Paris correspondent, whether he be working for England or for America. Political news, for instance, which does not coincide with the editorial policy of the paper, is not

welcomed. Where the foreign sub-editor is a partisan, the correspondent's difficulties will be very great. This partisanship often extends to questions of a non-political nature. The sub-editor's views on French literature and painting and drama may differ from those of the correspondent, and conflict may arise. It was such partisanship which deprived me of the honour of being the first writer in England to announce the discovery of that great poet, Maurice Maeterlinck. I had been in company of François Coppée, in a village near Paris, where we both had *villégiatures*, and Coppée had told me that he had received from Belgium a volume of poems by a young author which revealed genius. Maeterlinck, it appeared, had sent a copy of his *Serres Chaudes* to every member of the French Academy, and Coppée had been reading the one which he had received. That evening I sent the announcement to London that literary Paris was preparing to hail a new star. The paragraph was not inserted, and a few days later the editor, who was passing through Paris, informed me that the sub-editor had reported me to him for "puffing a friend." Some days later, Octave Mirbeau published his famous article on Maeterlinck, and the poet's reputation was established. This by no means put the sub-editor in question out of countenance, and for a long time afterwards the "Belgian Shakespeare" was referred to in the columns which were under his control in terms of derision. When some time later I met Maeterlinck at a luncheon given to him at the Café Voltaire by the young poets of Paris, I had some difficulty in assuring him that I was by no means responsible for the attacks which had been made against him in the paper which I was then representing.



## CHAPTER XX

Coquelin Cadet—Auguste Maquet—The “Ghost” of Alexandre Dumas—Why Bonvin Starved—Coquelin’s Mother—Behind the Scenes at the Comédie Française—Mademoiselle Reichemberg—Jules Claretie—Sardou—Sarah Bernhardt and the Cat—Jules Lemaitre and George Ohnet—Massenet—The Two Mounets—Coquelin the Elder—Parisian Painters—Melba’s Débuts in Paris—Whistler.

ONE of the earliest friendships which I formed in Paris was that of Coquelin cadet. It was a beautiful trait in the man’s character that first attracted me to him. It was revealed to me by something that I saw in his house.

That day, I remember, I had been attending the funeral of Auguste Maquet. I can hear my reader saying: “Who’s that? What Auguste Maquet?” Alas! that was the question that used to be asked in his lifetime. Auguste Maquet was one of the many “ghosts” of Alexandre Dumas. It was said of him that he did the lion’s share of Dumas’ work. It is not, I think, denied that the *Vicomte de Bragelonne* was entirely from his pen. At the time of his death it was stated that the *Trois Mousquetaires* also had been written almost alone by him. As we were walking behind his hearse I heard him spoken of as its sole author. Whether that be true I have never been able to find out. Honoré Champion, the publisher, who was a friend of Dumas, told me that it had never been



a Robert H. Sherard  
his amical souvenir  
Coquelin CaDET

*Photo by Bellingard, Lyon.*

M. COQUELIN, CADET.



contested that many of the works signed by him were written by other men. As a matter of fact, Dumas never denied the collaboration of Maquet. It is recorded of him that he once suggested to Emile de Girardin that Maquet's name should appear alongside of his as joint author of a *feuilleton* which he was contributing to *La Presse*. The editor refused. "A *feuilleton* signed 'Alexandre Dumas,'" he said, "is worth three francs a line. A *feuilleton* signed 'Dumas et Maquet' is worth only half that amount."

The indebtedness of the famous author to the obscure writer was notorious. It is related that one day Aurélien Scholl then quite a youth, was dining at Dumas' table. Dumas, who always prided himself on his cooking, announced a marvellous sauce, and having helped Scholl to some, asked with the expectant vanity of the artist, "Well, what do you think of my sauce?" "Est-ce du Maquet?" ("Did Maquet make it?") asked Scholl innocently.

Dumas, indeed, was most anxious that Maquet should enjoy some share of the credit. I think that this shows the important part which Maquet had taken in Dumas' production. "Is your mother in the theatre?" he said to his collaborator when on the evening of Oct. 27, 1847, the curtain had fallen on the last act of the dramatic adaptation of *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, and while the applauding audience was waiting to hear the name of the author announced. "Yes," answered Maquet, "she is," "Well, then," said Dumas, "watch her face." He then stepped before the curtain and announced Maquet's name as that of his collaborator. Ludovic Halévy told us this story over Maquet's grave. The poor man had long outlived such reputation as had been charily doled out to him, and he died in obscurity and poverty. Yet a great

concourse of literary and artistic Paris followed his hearse to the grave.

It was on returning from the cemetery that I called on Coquelin cadet. He then lived in a fine apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann, just behind the Opera. I was anxious to examine in detail the treasures of his art collection. I was particularly desirous of seeing a picture by Bonvin about which there was a story. Bonvin, who was considered to have many points of resemblance with our Turner, died in December, 1887, of starvation. He had been brought to this extremity by the fact that he would only sell his pictures to people whom he liked, and the other fact that he set the most modest valuation on the works of his brush. An American once visited his studio, and seeing a picture which he admired and which was nearly completed, asked Bonvin his price for it. "Three thousand francs," said Bonvin. This was less than a third of the sum which the American had expected to be asked, and the bargain was at once concluded. The American was to pay the amount on delivery of the picture in a few days. The picture, however, never came. A few months later, when the painter was asked why he had not kept his agreement, he answered: "The picture was only worth half the sum I asked for it. I sold it for the lesser amount to an actor of the Comédie Française. I preferred selling to a Frenchman."

Eccentricities of this kind had reduced him to absolute destitution. A few years before his death an exhibition of his works had been organised, and subsequently there had been held a sale on his behalf. The Baroness Nathan de Rothschild had helped him with money. Since that time he had been living a secluded and miserable life at St. Germain-en-Laye, deprived and depriving himself of all but the bare necessities of



existence. His best known works are his "Reading the Bible," "The Shoemaker's Apprentice," and the "Treport Blacksmiths." His reputation as the French Turner had been founded on other works, known only to the connoisseurs.

Poor Bonvin's picture hung in Coquelin's billiard-room. "Ce pauvre Bonvin," he said, as he showed it to me. That was indeed all that was to be said. I saw his Whistlers, his Sargents, and his Degas'. But what interested me most was a number of exquisite paintings by Cazin. The admiration which I expressed was such that some days later Coquelin took me to the house of a banker in the Rue de Clichy, who owned the most complete collection of Cazins in Paris. He also showed me his beautiful bust by Falguières and a fine head of Victor Hugo, "the master himself." After he had shown me all his treasures—and this is what I refer to above—he took me into another room and introduced me to his mother. I then recognised the little old woman who had let me in, and whom from her dress I had taken to be a peasant woman. We found her sitting in the dining-room, which, though it was luxuriously furnished, had about it the air of a kitchen in some prospering Norman farmhouse, with its grandfather's clock and the high iron fender. It was touching to see the simplicity of the old lady amidst her grand surroundings. She wore a large pair of horn spectacles, such as Whistler and, after him, J. Joseph-Renaud have since made fashionable in Paris, and was knitting stockings. She stood up as we entered, and seemed abashed. It was admirable to see the devotion of one of the most popular men in society to his old mother, and the pride with which he presented me to his *mère chérie*.—Her talk was as simple and unaffected as her dress was plain. She

was a homely country-woman from Boulogne, from where the Coquelins came.

When the actor saw how charmed I was with this corner of his home-life, this glimpse behind the scenes, he said, "You must see mother's room." I followed him from the luxury of the Parisian dining-room into what resembled the simple bedroom in a country cottage. The walls were papered with a common paper, and were covered with portraits of her sons and tokens of their triumphs—from the gilt wreath of paper leaves which this one had won at school as a boy to the laurel triumphs of the world-acclaimed actor on a metropolitan stage. By the bedside in a cheap pasteboard frame was the portrait of her daughter, long since dead. Next to this was one of her husband, the baker of Boulogne. On the mantelpiece under a big glass globe reposed upon a bright-coloured cushion the orange-blossom wreath which she had worn as a bride. A plain, old-fashioned silver watch lay on the table by the bedside. Here and there were other little treasures of bygone days, remembrances of her cottage life in Boulogne, before her sons had risen to fame and had conquered Paris. "My mother has worked hard for sixty years," said the actor, who had now altogether thrown aside the mask of mundane cynicism. The old lady said to me, "My sons are very good to me, monsieur."

It was the custom of the Coquelins every year on their mother's *fête* to give a dinner in her honour at the Café Anglais, to which the *élite* of Paris were invited. No queen was more royally entertained by hearts more loyal.

After that day I saw much of Coquelin cadet, and often used to spend the evenings in his dressing-room at the Français, watching him making up for his parts and

listening to the story of his life, his struggles, his success. He often used to talk to me about Gambetta, who was a great friend of his and who used to call him Coquelin *printemps*. When he was on the stage and away from me I used to go down and see the play from behind the scenes. I felt it to be a high honour and a great privilege to be a guest in the very house of Molière. There are few men for whose memory I have a deeper reverence. He had all the qualities which are the attributes of great men. With rare genius he combined a perfect goodness of heart. He honoured by his friendship the sterile pompousness of Louis the King. I know of no death recorded in history which revealed a greater heroism than his. I wandered through his house with bated breath and on tip-toe almost, as one who treads the aisles of a cathedral where the greatest men lie buried.

Sometimes I would venture into the green-room and exchange a few words with Mademoiselle Reichemberg, who liked to talk about General Boulanger. I remember that one day she asked me with great indignation to deny the story that she was making the General a tool for her former friends in the monarchical party. "My friendship with the Duc d'Aumale," she said, "has nothing to do with my present friendship for General Boulanger. I naturally keep up my former relationships, but they have nothing to do with my intimacy with the General, who has been a friend of mine, and nothing more, ever since I was a little girl."

I sometimes met Jules Claretie, the director of the theatre, behind the scenes, and I remember once asking him—it was at the time of Donnelly's visit to Paris—what was his opinion about the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. Monsieur Claretie never espouses any side in a controversy—at least with the authority of his name—

and his answer was a typical one. He said : " I have read numerous pamphlets on the subject, and they have taught me nothing. It suffices me to admire *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, and I do not seek to know if God exists ; the sun shines, and that is enough."

On another occasion—I fancy it must have been at the revival of *Patrie*—I met Sardou in the green-room, and we talked about the accusations of plagiarism which had been brought against him by Maurice Barrymore of New York, whose death from general paralysis was recorded a few months ago. Sardou was very angry, and had evidently been stung by the accusation, " I do not know a single word of his piece," he said. " I have quite enough to do with the Barrymores of the Old World without having, in addition, to trouble myself about those of the New."

A constant subject of conversation in the green-room was the question whether Sarah Bernhardt would ever be induced to return to the Comédie Française. I remember Coquelin *aîné* once saying to me on this subject, when I had told him that Madame Bernhardt had said to me a day or two previously that under certain circumstances she would like to return, " What in the world do you think Sarah could do with the income they would allow her ?" I said, " She told me that they had offered her forty-five thousand francs a year, which was not enough to subsist upon." Coquelin exclaimed, " Forty-five thousand francs ! It is incredible generosity. I should have thought they would have offered twenty thousand francs. And why in the world should she play for forty-five thousand francs a year when she can make half as much again in one month ? This month, for instance, she will make over sixty thousand francs."

There are reasons which I need not enter upon here

why I prefer to pass over in silence my memories of the great and wonderful Sarah Bernhardt. But just as I was glad to relate about Coquelin cadet what I considered a beautiful trait in his character, so also I wish to show that Sarah Bernhardt, who is often charged with being worldly to the point of heartlessness, has the humanest of hearts. I don't think that there is ever anything very wrong about a man or woman who is kind to animals. In the autumn of 1889 a horrible story went the round of the American papers.\* This so excited the indignation

\* THE ORIGINAL CAT STORY.

[*Extensively printed in Western Papers.*]

A Western society woman who has just returned from Europe tells a shocking story of Sarah Bernhardt's cruelty to a pet cat which has created no little indignation in the tender hearts of those who have heard the story. The lady was a great admirer of the actress, and while in Paris last spring took occasion to call on her. Madame Bernhardt sometimes amuses herself painting and modelling. She received the lady very kindly, and invited her earnestly to call again. After a lapse of a few weeks another visit was made to the actress. She was found very much absorbed in the half-finished figure of her little model, which she had been working at.

At the request of the lady, who was anxious to see her at work, she continued working. After awhile a frisky little cat, the pet of Sarah, rushed into the room, purring and scratching with delight. The cat sprang upon the lap of the actress, but she was so much interested in her work that the animal did not receive the expected caressing.

After the cat had interrupted her work by repeating this evidence of affection several times, she became very much irritated, and expressed herself with energy in highly seasonable language.

But the little pet, not understanding, kept on its gambols until Bernhardt, evidently exasperated, rose with a shriek, and with a demoniacal expression on her face lifted the poor little animal by the loose skin at the back of the neck, and, raising the top of a Chouberski stove which stood in the room, thrust the struggling pet in on the hot coals; then, shutting the cover down, she calmly resumed her work as if utterly unconscious of the heartrending cries of her pet, which grew fainter and fainter as it slowly roasted to death.



of the Americans that it was seriously proposed that the great French actress should be boycotted during the tour she was then about to make in the States. The papers took the story up and fanned public execration of the alleged deed into fever heat. The matter looked very serious for the success of Sarah's tour, at a time when a failure in America would have meant disaster to her affairs. I accordingly hurried off to her to represent to her the gravity of the situation, and to place my services at her disposal for giving to the malicious story a widespread denial. The following is a report of our conversation, which, published all over the American Continent, nailed that lie to the counter. I reprint it with the amusing headlines under which it originally appeared :

## SARAH BERNHARDT'S CAT.

---

THE ECCENTRIC ACTRESS DENIES THAT  
ROAST FELINE STORY.

---

A VERY INTERESTING INTERVIEW.

---

The Famous French Actress Very Much  
Annoyed by the Tales of Her Cruelty  
that Have Been Published Here—  
What Sarah's One Hundred and  
Twelve Birds Think of the  
Story—She Never Abused  
A Pet in Her Life.

---

SARAH'S INDIGNANT DENIAL.

(SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE WORLD.)

PARIS, Oct. 3.—I called on Sarah Bernhardt this evening, and found her in her dressing-room in the Porte St. Martin Theatre, in company of the *jeune premier* of the Tosca troupe, whose temples were still running with the gore of Scarpia's torments. Sarah, for a widow of so recent creation, was looking remarkably lively and younger than ever.

I said: "It's about this cat story."

She said: "It's the most ridiculous nonsense that was ever invented."

"Is there no truth in it whatever? Perhaps you singed a rug or something; a catskin, one of those things you use in France against rheumatism or something of the sort?"

"Faugh! Just think of the horrible smell that would have made. No, there is no truth in it at all. I can't imagine who gets up these stories against me. This is not the first time I have been accused of ill-treating animals. About four years ago there was put into circulation a story that I had baked a favourite spaniel of mine (the dearest little dog you ever saw) in the oven."

"Who are these ladies who accuse you?"

"Oh, I think they must be (what do you call them?) hallelujah lasses, isn't it?—people belonging to the Salvation Army."

"There is a story that you have instructed solicitors to prosecute the inventors of this accusation?"

"Oh, no! I hear the story has been withdrawn. All I have done was to write to London to give it my most emphatic denial."

"I suppose you look at it all as a very good joke?"

"Oh, not at all! I think it a very serious matter, and am most upset about it. I know that for Mrs. Took, the Presidentess of the Humane Society, to have taken it up there must have been a strong feeling on the subject. The resolution passed by the Missouri ladies, inviting the women of America to receive me with coldness on my next visit to the States, would be, if it were generally adopted, the most disastrous thing that could happen to me, both socially and as an artist.

"In America the women are the absolute mistresses of everything. (*Les femmes en Amérique mènent tout.*) The man does not exist in matters of this sort. You have no idea," she continued, turning to a lady sitting in her dressing-room, "of the importance of the rôle played in America by the women. It is as if the men, having no time to attend to matters of sentiment, relegate them into the hands of their wives and sisters. But I cannot think that this resolution will have any effect, because it is not only completely unjust, but is so obviously absurd. I can quite understand that if the Americans believe me to be guilty of this wickedness, this piece of cold-blooded cruelty, they should be disgusted, because there is perhaps no country in the world where animals are better treated than in the States. You should see how fat the horses are out there. I have often thought as I have been travelling through America and have seen their splendid cattle, of the poor miserable horses of Paris, which you know the Parisians themselves call

'The Woman's Paradise, the Horse's Hell.' So I am most anxious to have that story denied. I assure you again and again that there is not a word of truth in it."

"You have the reputation of being very fond of animals?"

"Fond? But I adore them. Yes, that is not exaggeration. I adore them. I have loved them all my life. A pet animal is such a good friend to have. It is faithful; it is fond of you; it wants nothing from you but a little kindness, and it does not worry you as men do with interminable compliments and idiocies. Why, I look forward to the time when I shall be too old to play, and shall have ever so many animals about me. I think that will be the happiest time of my life. Did you never hear how angry I was with Pasteur and the quarrel we had? I called him an old barbarian. I never can be without animals. I don't think I could live without them. People thought that I kept those tiger-cats to get myself talked about. At least that is what the papers said.

"It was nothing of the sort. It is because I have a real affection for them, and more than an affection—a most sincere admiration. The tiger-cat is the most graceful thing. We women who think ourselves the most graceful things on God's earth, we can't compare with it. Then there is my leopard, the dearest of friends. Do you know that I feel that they understand every word I say to them? I have thought this all my life, that animals understand all we say to them, but despise us and all our base intrigues too much to trouble to answer us; that is, to trouble to learn our language to answer us with.

"I dare say that that is all nonsense, but it is my impression. I know that often when my nerves are unstrung and it would drive me mad to have to talk to Peter or Paul (you know you have seen me in that state) I have the greatest pleasure in going and talking for hours together to my cats or to my dogs or to my birds. I often tell them things that I would never tell to any human being, and I am sure they sympathise with me.

"Thus when I heard about this story of my ill-treating that cat, I had all my animals brought into my studio, where my big bird-cage is, and I told them what was being said about me over there, and I am sure that they all nearly died of laughing. The birds were terribly noisy all that evening, doubtless passing counter resolutions. Ask Madame Guerard, my housekeeper, if I am a woman who would torture an animal. She will tell you that before I eat I see that the pets have been cared for, that I often feed them myself when I am not too tired out with work and worry, but that always they are my first care."

"You still have as many birds as you used to have?"

"More than ever. I have now one hundred and twelve pet birds, and I know and love every one of them. Yes, one hundred and twelve birds; and so if my reputation of baking my pets in ovens be true you need never be frightened of my dying of hunger. I have there the wherewithal to feed myself for a long time. One bird a day. Why, they would last me nearly half a year. And as they are of many different kinds, I could vary my menu pretty often. But, to be serious, please tell the women of America that a cruel injustice has been done me and that it has pained me much. I think I know them well enough to say that they will not let me suffer long."

Cadet's dressing-room was an informal *salon* in which the actor used to hold receptions for his intimates. I made a number of acquaintances there. One of these was Jules Lemaitre, who in those days had not revealed the fact that, although a rigorous critic of the dramatic works of others, he was able himself to write plays of the very highest merit. I enjoyed many a talk with this Academician, and he used to send me copies of his books with friendly inscriptions. One day, however, he seemed cold in his manner. I learned the reason why when I reached home and found lying on my table the post from New York. At that time I was writing literary articles on French books for the *New York Times*. Some time previously I had forwarded a long review of a very poor novel by George Ohnet, entitled *Volonté*, and in a subsequent letter a short notice of Jules Lemaitre's new volume of *Impressions de Théâtre*. By an unfortunate coincidence the two reviews had been thrown together so as to form one article, and the heading given to that article by the editor was "Books by Ohnet and Lemaitre."

Knowing what was the opinion held by the Academician on the books of the author of *Le Maître des Forges*, as demonstrated by the scathing and never-forgotten criticism of that novel which



he wrote, I could understand that he had not been pleased to be put by me (as he thought) in such company. I hoped that Ohnet might not have felt the same annoyance, for I knew how sensitive he is. I remember his once telling me in his house in the Avenue Trudaine that he did not think "that such an unceasing flood of abuse had ever been let loose against any man of letters as against him." "Everything," he said, "that is most vile and most cruel has been said and written about me. And yet I have never done anything bad that I know of. I don't steal the silver spoons when I go out to dinner-parties, and there is nothing particularly disreputable either in my own past or in that of my family." I told him that I fancied the Parisian journalists could not forgive him the fact that he had engaged in literature when he had a private income of eighty thousand francs a year, and had made such large sums of money by his pen. I reminded him of what was said about Lord Byron by less successful authors, who wondered what right a lord had to seek for literary fame and emolument.

*Apropos* of stealing spoons at table, I am reminded of a delightful *déjeuner* I had with Monsieur Massenet, the composer, at his house in the Rue Général Foy, in the course of which he told me that —, whom he used to meet in Rome, at the time when as a Prix de Rome he was studying there, was a confirmed kleptomaniac, and that it used to afford him great diversion to watch the maestro's efforts to pocket even the most cumbrous pieces of plate. "He was wonderfully dexterous," he said, "and one day, to the astonishment of us all who were watching him on the sly, he succeeded in getting a silver soup-ladle up his sleeve." Massenet also told me about Liszt's curious use of tobacco. "He could not play unless he had a cigar



in his mouth. But he did not light it nor smoke it, he used to eat it. He would sit down to the piano with a cigar in his mouth, and keep munching at it while he played. When the cigar was quite eaten up, he used to rise from the instrument."

The *déjeuner* which Massenet gave me that day was one of the best I have ever partaken of. He gave me some cognac which came from his paternal home in Lyons, and which dated from the famous siege of that city by the Sans-Culottes. One has a peculiar feeling of gratitude towards those who in the course of life have fed one well. But I have other reasons for affection for the great composer. He is a man of a very kind heart. Some years ago I was attending—at St. Ives in Cornwall—at the sick-bed of a lady of my family who was dangerously ill. One day she was speaking to me of music, and of her great admiration for *Manon Lescaut*, Massenet's opera. "I wish I could hear some of that music now," she said. I thought it would please her to have the score from Paris, and I wrote to Massenet and told him the circumstances, and asked him to tell his publisher to forward at my charges a certain *édition de luxe* of the opera. By return of post the maestro sent me a beautiful copy, with the kindest inscription in it, begging my acceptance of it for my sick friend. Her delight at this present helped greatly, I believe, in her recovery.

I often used to go to the office of a publisher of music in the Rue Vivienne, where Massenet had a room, and talk with him about music and musicians. I remember how amused he was when one day I said to him, "Tell me, *maître*, how do these wonderful melodies come to you? Do you hear them? Do they gush forth under your fingers as they wander over the keys?"

He said, "I have no piano in the house when I am writing my music. I *see* my melodies as I write them. I never try them on the piano until the whole score is written."

He used to tell me of his great admiration for Gounod. He played the cymbals in the orchestra at the Opera on the first night of *Faust*, and when it was hissed he felt so indignant that it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from vaulting over into the stalls and banging his cymbals about the heads of the people who had dared to show disapproval of a work which he considered to be one of the finest productions of musical genius. I expect that the fighting spirit in him was inherited from his father, who was a colonel in the army of the great Napoleon. Massenet, who was born in 1846, was the twelfth son of this fine old warrior.

A trait in his character which specially appealed to me as a literary man was that he always spoke of the librettist of an opera as entitled at least to a half-share in the credit of its success. "I can write no music without a poem. The book inspires me." On one occasion he said, "I wish that I could find a book. I want to write an opera." That the librettist was entitled to half the royalties accruing from the performances was never for an instant in doubt in the composer's mind. In this respect much greater fairness is shown in France to authors. In England the librettist has to be satisfied with a fee which is never a large one. He has never been considered on any parity with the composer. The writer of words for songs in England contents himself with a guinea for the copyright of his words, and more often a quarter of that sum is considered sufficient remuneration for him. In

France the poet shares equally with the composer, and so jealously are the author's rights safeguarded that where a maker of barrel organs, for instance, makes use of copyright tunes which were originally written for songs, the writer of the words to which those songs were written receives half the royalties paid by the hurdy-gurdy man. This is, of course, as it should be, and I much admired in Massenet that he so fully realised its justice.

Mounet-Sully, the great tragedian, who, with Sir Henry Irving,<sup>1</sup> is the greatest living *artist* (as distinct from actor) on the stage, I came to know personally in a curious fashion. One night very late I entered into one of those confectioner's shops on the Boulevard St. Michel which are known as *tartines*, where to noctambulous people are dispensed sandwiches, milk, and, when the police are not in the neighbourhood, stronger drinks served in teacups. Here I fell in with a tall dark man of striking appearance, whose magnificent eyes seemed to be affected by some nervous disorder. We began to talk, and the mutual interest that we took in the conversation was such that we left the *tartine* together and proceeded up the boulevard on a nightly stroll.

The stranger talked to me of children, the joy that they bring into a house, of the utter desolation of those who have lost them. He spoke very tenderly and very beautifully, and after I had left him at the corner of the Rue Gay Lussac, I returned to the shop to ask the woman in attendance who he was. "That was Mounet-Sully of the Comédie Française," she said. I could not believe it. How could I have failed to recognise him? "He has much changed of late," she said. "Do you not remember the misfortune which befell him? He had

<sup>1</sup> Died October 13, 1905.

two little girls, two little darling children. They had been playing one afternoon in the Luxembourg Gardens, and when they came in they complained of feeling ill. It was meningitis, and they were carried off almost at the same hour."

I often used to meet Paul Mounet, the younger brother of Mounet-Sully, another excellent actor of the Comédie Française troupe. I remember meeting him once outside his theatre, and he asked me to come into a *café* and to explain the English coinage to him. He was going to London with a company of other artists from the Français, and it was his first visit to England. The enterprise, it may be remembered, resulted in complete failure, and on his return, whenever we met, he used to joke about his eagerness to study a monetary system with which he was to enjoy so little familiarity.

Coquelin the elder I frequently used to see at his house in the Rue Presburg. I remember calling on him, after his return from his first visit to America, to see the wonderful collection which he then possessed. While he was showing me his treasures he talked to me about his American experiences. He complained that he had been much attacked in New York by critics who resented some article he had written against Sir Henry Irving. Mr. Winter, of the *Tribune*, who was a great friend of Irving's, had been "very severe"; the *New York Herald* had boycotted him; his name was never once mentioned in that paper; he was invariably referred to as the "leading actor." He said that it was unjust treatment, because he had never denied Sir Henry's genius. He considered him a perfect artist; but "perhaps you idolise him a little too much in England." I told Coquelin that he could have no conception how we did idolise Sir Henry.

He was full of anecdotes about the Americans. He said that General Horace Porter, who spoke at a gathering at the Century Club, was one of the funniest men he had ever heard. "His speech was inimitable, and he kept us in roars of laughter for fully half an hour. One of the things he said I remember was, 'The American woman is like a pin. It is her head which keeps her from getting lost.' I thought that very good." He spoke with some bitterness of the Comédie Française, but added, "Perhaps when I am an old man I shall make it my 'Invalides.' But, *en attendant . . .*"

There was a young man working at an easel in Coquelin's drawing-room. The actor presented me to him. It was Monsieur Friant, who has since risen to great reputation as a painter. People who have visited the Luxembourg Gallery will remember his "Coming out of Church." He appeared to me a man of versatile talent and great knowledge of the technique of his art. He seemed to be attached to Coquelin's establishment as a kind of Court painter. I was able to draw the attention of Americans to his work, and I have sometimes flattered myself that I gave him his first start, in the commercial sense of the word.

Amongst many other distinguished painters with whom I was brought into frequent contact were Degas, de Nittis, Cazin, the Pizarros, Jan van Beers, and the Stevenses. I was on friendly terms with poor Munkaczy, who used to let me sit in his gorgeous studio and watch him paint. I could not but wonder why a man of his acquired wealth should wish to paint such very bad pictures. I was frequently in Detaille's studio in the Boulevard Malesherbes. It was a great contrast to the studio of the Hungarian painter. It was perhaps the most



unpretentious studio which was to be seen in Paris. He used to talk to me about his visits to the Court of St. Petersburg and his friendship with the Tsar and Tsarina.

According to Monsieur Detaille, the Emperor Alexander was an excellent judge of pictures. "What chiefly struck me in His Majesty's character," he told me, "is his excellent artistic understanding. I had taken with me several of my sketch-books, and the Tsar seemed to understand the developments of which even my crudest sketches were capable. His remarks were always just and appropriate, and his criticisms very much more intelligible than those of many of the great professional critics. He has been very good to me," continued Monsieur Detaille. "Before he came to the throne he used often to visit my studio when he was in Paris. He is the gentlest and most quiet of men."

On another occasion Detaille told me how successful his career had been from the first. At the same time he was well aware that the critics were lying in wait for him, and that at the slightest sign of weakness on his part they would be down upon him. "To give you a Russian simile," he said, stooping down to stroke a Russian *sloughi*, a present from the Tsarina. "If I fall out of the sledge the wolves who have been following waiting for their opportunity will be down upon me in a second."

Detaille says that our King is one of the worst sitters he has ever known. "He is so vivacious, so energetic, and so fond of conversation that it is difficult to do justice to his portrait." He had had better fortune with the picture of the Duke of Connaught.

One day in 1889, before the opening of the Exhibition, I found him in a state of some annoyance. "My

American clients are treating me very badly," he said. "I was extremely anxious, naturally, to be represented at the Retrospective Exhibition by my best work, and I asked my American purchasers to lend me my paintings for the purpose, offering every guarantee in the way of insurance for their safe return. But, with the exception of the Corcoran Gallery, I have met with no courtesy from any of my customers. I particularly wanted to exhibit my "After Rezonville," which I consider my best work, and I begged Mr. Vanderbilt to lend it to me. He wrote back refusing, but said that anybody who wanted to see it would be admitted to his gallery in New York on presentation of my card. There is a great consolation for me in that, is there not? It's all nonsense to say that a picture risks being damaged in crossing the Atlantic, and I cannot at all understand the motive of these refusals. I am disheartened and disgusted."

"You should do," I suggested, "what the London landowners do with their land, Monsieur Detaille. You should lease out your pictures, and refuse to sell them outright."

"That is a good idea," said the artist, "and it is really one which we shall have to put into execution if this sort of thing goes on. An artist works for fame rather than for money, and his picture remains his work although he has sold it ten times over. I have already profited by the lesson I have learned, and have sold my last pictures with the express condition that I can have the use of them for any exhibitions which may take place. I now look upon my pictures in America as buried, and it has been suggested to me that I should represent the missing ones at the exhibition by so many coffins."

It has been the custom of the younger artists ever since I can remember to laugh at *le père* Bouguereau. Possibly envy at the large sums of money which he was known to earn by his brush and palette dictated some of the witticisms which were levelled at his head. No doubt his style, and especially his colouring, which were as characteristic as was that of Henner in another way, lent themselves to criticism. He painted to sell; he had found out what his rich clients wanted, and suited himself to their taste. The man himself was a simple-minded and amiable gentleman. He was fond of talking of the prices which his canvases produced, and told me that some picture in a fashionable New York restaurant was his most successful work. It had fetched the biggest price which had been paid for any of his pictures. He was usually at work on some pink Venus emerging from the sea, whilst chocolate-coloured youths were blowing in silver shells, and we actually calculated one day how much in francs and centimes each minute's work of this kind produced for the fortunate craftsman. However, the day came when we talked on another subject.

I had been the friend of his son, young Bouguereau, the advocate, a bright, promising young fellow. He was the last of the painter's children, and he too was carried off by consumption. I used to tell his father how popular the young man had been amongst us all, what a good fellow he was, and how at the Palais de Justice he had been looked upon as an advocate of the greatest promise. I told him, too, in what terms of affection the young man used to talk of his parents, and how manfully, although he was not physically strong, he used to impose silence on anybody who in Latin Quarter *café* discussions on art ventured to speak disrespectfully of *le père* Bouguereau. I think that I was able to

bring some comfort to the heart of the sorely stricken father.

A delightful remembrance will always be that of Melba when she first came to Paris from Brussels. I first saw her at the Hôtel Scribe just after her *débuts* at the Grand Opera. She told me that she was "intensely happy." Her first appearance at the Opera had been a perfect triumph, and after the fourth act of Thomas's *Hamlet*, she had been recalled three times, which, as Monsieur Ritt, the co-director of the Opera, told me, had not happened to any artist for over thirty years. She spoke to me of her early beginnings, and gave Madame Marchesi full credit for her share in her success. She spoke so nicely of everybody. It was a pleasure to listen to her. In Paris it is malevolent remarks which one is usually called upon to hear. She was so grateful to Gounod. "He has always been so kind about my voice," she said. Then she pointed to a photograph of the composer which stood on the mantelpiece, and drew my attention to what the maestro had written beneath his picture: "To the pretty Juliette for whom I long."

She seemed to have pleasant things to say about so many people. "The Princess of Wales has been very good to me, and I have special reasons for gratitude to the Queen of the Belgians, who was so very kind to me during my season in Brussels. She rarely missed one of my evenings until the death of Prince Rudolph, and whenever she came to the Opera she used to send for me to come to the royal box and talk with her. She is very good and clever about music." She told me that when the papers were unkind about her singing it made her very unhappy, but she said, "Those which are disposed to be unkind about me here in Paris can only find



against me that I am a foreigner. So I am. I am an Australian girl, and I am proud of it." I asked her if she had any secret for preserving and strengthening her voice. "No," she said, "I do nothing at all. I take care not to talk too much on the days when I am to sing in the evening. My voice is young and fresh, and needs no artifices. I usually dine at four, and take nothing more before singing. But I make up for that afterwards, and always have a jolly good supper as soon I get home."

I remember that as we were talking, another visitor was announced. This was the theatrical critic on an important Parisian paper, who gave lessons in French. Foreign actresses who were appearing on the Parisian stages found it advisable to make use of his professorial services. It was the easiest way of pacifying the critic. Melba's early career in Paris was not altogether smooth. There was a rival *prima donna* on the Opera stage—an American—who waged war in the press on the Australian singer. One day Melba called at my house to show me, with great indignation, some very offensive paragraphs which had been printed about her in Australian papers, and to ask my advice as to the best way of answering these attacks. I told Melba—and the event has proved me right—that an artist like herself had no need to trouble about criticism of that kind. "Il n'y a, madame, que les petits hommes qui redoutent les petits écrits," I said. I told her that there was no height of artistic success to which she might not aspire and which she would not reach.

During a period of twenty years I often met Whistler in Paris, London, and Dieppe. I was introduced to him in 1883 by his friend Oscar Wilde, and we frequently dined together in the grill-room of the Café Royal. These were memorable dinners: the two brightest



wits of the last century in England were then in the plenitude of their powers. Whistler was undoubtedly one of the greatest masters of repartee who has ever lived. His reputation, unlike that of many wits, was not founded on any *esprit d'escalier*. He said his clever things at the very moment when they were called for; he did not think, as he was going downstairs, of the repartee he might have made. On the very last occasion on which I saw him—it was at the Café Napolitain—I witnessed his encounter with a bore. “Well, Mr. Whistler, and how are you getting on?” said the man, approaching. “I’m not,” said Whistler, draining his glass of absinthe and putting on his hat. “I’m getting off.” He had a way of saying the simplest things which invested them with an air of brilliancy. After a scandal in London, in which a former friend of his had been involved, I met him in the Bodega, and I said, “What do you think of all this, Mr. Whistler?” He said, “Think! I never think.” There seems nothing in this remark as one reads it; it was the man’s tone, his accent, the gesture which accompanied his words, which gave them their peculiar appositeness.

I remember how in a similar way Oscar Wilde had been impressed by something that Lord Beaconsfield had said to him. He had met the Prime Minister as he was coming away from some gathering in London, and had expressed the hope that his lordship was very well. “Is one ever very well, Mr. Wilde?” said Lord Beaconsfield. When Wilde related this incident, people used to wonder what cleverness he could detect in the remark. Here, again, it was the tone, the accents, the gestures of the speaker which made repartee of a retort.

Like all great men, Whistler had his *petitesses*. The *petits écrits* of provincial journalists rankled in his mind.

I fancy that early struggles had somewhat embittered him against the critics. He seemed to believe in the power of even obscure newspapers to affect an artist's reputation. I have seen him angry at something which had appeared in some such paper as the *Stoke Poges Enquirer*. One used to fancy he was jesting, but the fact was that even the obscurest writer could inflict a wound on his almost morbid self-esteem.<sup>1</sup>

I remember the fact that I once had a long conversation with him in his *atelier* in the Rue Notre Dame des Petits Champs, but little beyond that. He was fencing with me the whole time. I represented to him the "interviewer," although I had called upon him with no such intentions, and he said, "You must not try it on with me. Just before I left London," he added, "there met me one who tried to beguile me, and who said, 'How do you do, Mr. Whistler?'" in a lamb-like manner, and I said, "No, no, no! No, really I have nothing to say. There will be a time doubtless, some day later on, when there will be charming things to be said, but it isn't now; no, it isn't now." I remember that he talked to me for upwards of an hour, as he knew how to talk; but even when I had parted from him, and tried to remember the things that had been spoken, all was intangible, like in a dream. There were the things that I had said to Mr. Whistler, but where was what Mr. Whistler had said to me? There were smiles and laughter, and many things which were "charming and so on," and that was all.

I have often since thought of that visit and that hour's conversation with the great man. And when I think of

<sup>1</sup> Michelet, speaking of artists, says, "L'artiste est un *homme-femme*. Je veux dire un homme complet, qui ayant les deux sexes de l'esprit, est fécond; toutes fois presque toujours avec prédominance de la sensibilité irritable et colérique."

it, I remember that as I was going up to his studio, which was very high up, having lost count of the storeys I had climbed, I met a fat *bourgeois* coming down the stairs, and asked to be directed. "You must go right up to the top of the staircase," he said cheerfully. "On ne peut pas aller plus loin que Monsieur Whistler"—a remark which was both an epigram and a true appreciation.

## CHAPTER XXI

Journalism in France—Contrasted with Journalism in England—Black-mailers—How a Provincial Journal was Founded—A Fighting Editor—“*Les Feuilles Soumises*”—Editing Provincial Journals—Charles Baudelaire as an Editor—The French Newspaper-reader—Serial Stories—The Masters of the Art—Drawing Pay—The Editor of *Le Figaro*—The Circulations Over a Million—And Under Five Hundred—How Dead Papers are kept Alive—Some Able Editors—Aurélien Scholl—Henri Rochefort.

IT used to be a saying in France that journalism led to everything, provided that one quitted the career. That has altered now. Journalism still leads to everything in France and there is no necessity to abandon it. Indeed, men who have reached the highest points to which their careers can lead any man find satisfaction and profit in maintaining their relations with the press as workers. When Zola was earning £8,000 a year, he did not disdain to contribute articles to the papers; Clémenceau, although he is a senator, is a daily contributor to the *Aurore*; and the most famous politicians in France temporarily removed from power are glad to return, not like Thiers, to their *chères études*, but to the journalistic labours by which they first attracted attention to themselves.

Journalism has always ranked in France higher than it has ever stood in England, where even to-day the profession is regarded without much esteem. I was reading the other day a biography of that unfortunate

divine, Dr. Dodd, and I came across a passage where it was said that after his return in disgrace from France, whither he had fled after his dismissal from Court on a charge of simony, he might still have retrieved his character, "had he not sunk so low as to become the editor of a newspaper."

Prejudice has diminished in England since those days, but it is still not unusual to hear the profession spoken of with contempt. In France the gazetteer has always enjoyed consideration rather than obloquy. To be attached to an important paper confers decided social distinction on a man. This is not because journalists are better remunerated in France than they are in England, for the contrary is the case. The pay of the ordinary working journalist in Paris is comparatively very low indeed.

I was speaking some time ago with the leader writer on the principal French evening paper about the salaries paid in France and in England, and he told me that his salary for his exclusive daily services on this important and wealthy paper, in which all subjects are treated in the most scholarly style, was £24 a month, which is less than a good reporter can earn in Fleet Street. A large majority of the writers to the Parisian press are remunerated with so much a line for such articles of theirs as are inserted. There are some very few men who are earning £1,000 or £2,000 a year, but these are men who have won distinction in other fields. It is said that for one of his political articles in the *Journal Poincaré* receives £40, but then Poincaré is an ex-Minister. Articles of similar length by obscure men would be remunerated with a sovereign or thirty shillings. The lineage rates vary from a halfpenny to twopence halfpenny a line. Magazine



articles, such as in England are paid for with £10, £15, or £20, would bring in Paris not half the smallest sum.

On the *Revue des deux Mondes* the rule used to be that no first article by any new contributor was paid for, and none but the few ever succeeded in placing a second one. But in Latin countries the commercial spirit does not sway public opinion as it does in England and America, and if the journalist in France enjoys a social distinction which is refused to his colleague in Anglo-Saxon countries it is because in France talent of any kind takes precedence on mere wealth. When Mrs. Mackay quarrelled with Meissonier, Albert Wolff wrote an article in the *Figaro*, which well expressed the general opinion in France on the relative position of talent and wealth. "Millionaires," he wrote, "are to be numbered by the score in Paris, but we have only one Meissonier."

I remember a long conversation which I had with Magnard, the editor of the *Figaro*, on this subject. I had called on him, by his invitation, shortly after my encounter with him at Countess Kessler's house. I remember saying to him, "Journalists have a better position in society in Paris than in any other country in Europe. Is not that so?" His answer was, "Yes. We cannot complain. On the whole the social position of a journalist in France is an excellent one. A few very lofty leaders of society do, it is true, affect to keep the journalist at a distance, but their number is too small for consideration." Arthur Meyer, of the *Gaulois*, has the *entrée* into the most exclusive society of the Boulevard St. Germain, and it should be remembered that in Paris the nobility are much more exclusive than in any other country in the world. The foreign

correspondent who takes the trouble to procure proper introductions can gain admission to the best circles in Paris, and I have often wondered why so very few ever do trouble to do so.

To the French tradesman, it must be admitted, the journalist is ever an object of suspicion. The reason of that is that journalists being badly paid for their literary work are always on the look-out for the better remuneration which they can earn as advertisement canvassers, and if the French tradesman dreads the approach of any man known to be connected with a newspaper it is because he fears that he may unwittingly be drawn into an expensive advertising bargain. A general opinion in this class is that for money anything can be inserted in a French newspaper. The suspicion is not altogether unwarranted. There are too many papers in France which will print anything, provided their price be paid.

I remember once accompanying a London solicitor to the office of a well-known Parisian literary daily to which, at that time, the foremost writers in France used to contribute. He was anxious to procure the insertion of an article in this paper. I understood that it was an article dealing with the grievances of one of his clients, a lady who was suing for divorce against her husband.

The case was one which was attracting great attention in Touraine. I merely acted in the matter as the solicitor's guide and interpreter. He had been introduced to me by a mutual friend. I presented him to Monsieur G——, who was at that time the editor of the paper, and told him what was required of him. He said, "Let me look at the article." The solicitor handed him the manuscript. Monsieur G—— examined it through his *monocle*, then folded it up, and, letting his

eyeglass drop, said, "That will cost three thousand francs." The solicitor asked me to say that he thought the sum too large. I translated these remarks to the editor, who then said to me, "Have you read what he wants us to print?" I answered that I had no idea of the nature of the article.

Monsieur G—— then handed me the manuscript. It was a scandalous article, a series of foul libels about the woman's husband. "Well, is three thousand francs too dear?" said the editor. I simply handed the paper back to him and walked out of the office. In my absence the solicitor and the editor came to terms, for a few days later the article duly appeared. The result was that the husband brought an action for libel against the paper, and recovered £20 damages. That sum, with the costs of the suit, however, came out of the pockets of the shareholders: the editor benefited to the extent of three thousand francs.

In connection with that case, I had previously gained a curious insight into one branch of provincial journalism in France. I had been asked by the friend who afterwards introduced me to the solicitor, to whom I have referred, to go, as an act of friendship, to the town where the woman's husband lived, and try to close the mouth of a local editor, who was attacking her in his paper. It was said that it was the husband who was inspiring these attacks and paying for them.

I accordingly went to the town in the centre of France and saw the editor of the paper. I telegraphed back to my friend in London that "it was only a question of money." I was then asked to make the best terms I could for the woman. I eventually arranged with the editor that for a monthly payment of £8 a month from London he would gradually modify the tone of his

articles on the *affaire* X., and in the end come over to the wife's side. But he said it could only be done very gradually. After the first payment had been made the tone of the articles was certainly modified, but the subsequent process of modification was so very slow that the solicitor considered that his client was not getting her money's worth, and refused the fourth remittance.

Some days later I received a communication from the town in the centre of France, which was made up of printed letters cut from a newspaper and pasted on a sheet of paper, telling me that no money had been received from London, and adding that if money did not come at once, "the other side of the question would be taken up with greater vigour than ever."

I was curious to see the thing through, and I returned to T——. The editor told me that he had done his best, but that he was hampered by the fact that the proprietor of the paper was one of the husband's friends, and that it would be more than his place was worth for him to espouse the wife's cause in a more effective manner. I then called on the proprietor, and appealed to his sense of honour and gallantry, and I did not leave him until I had extracted a sort of promise that she should be spared in the future in his columns. A hint was, however, conveyed to me that the best way of pacifying the proprietor of the paper would be to invest in a certain number of shares in the paper.

In communicating this to London, I suggested that it would be very much cheaper to start an opposition paper, entirely devoted to the wife's interests. I was afterwards asked to arrange for the production of such a paper. I went straight off to the *Café des Martyrs*, which I knew to be the rendezvous of journalistic free-lances,

and after making a few inquiries found the man I wanted. He was a journalist of some ability, but he was specially recommended to me as having once killed a man in a pistol duel. This man undertook to produce a large four-page weekly paper for the sum of £12 a week, and very shortly afterwards the city of T—— was endowed with a new paper, which lived just as long as the *affaire X.* lasted.

One might write a long chapter on press blackmailing in France. Indeed, the things which Monsieur de Lesseps told me about his experiences of this would make a book; but the subject is an unpleasant one, and I will say no more. The weekly sum for which my provincial editor undertook to produce his weekly paper seems incredibly small, when it is remembered that he had to get his living out of the allowance; but in France it seems possible to found a paper and to keep it going on very small capital indeed. What would be thought in Fleet Street if a man were to start a daily paper in London with a capital of £1,200? Yet this is exactly the sum with which the poet Camille de Sainte-Croix started his *La Révolte*, a daily Parisian paper. It lasted just thirty days, at the rate of a thousand francs a day.

The provincial newspaper proprietor in France has a resource which his Parisian colleague often has not. He is subsidized by one or other of the local political parties. Often he is in the pay of the Government. His paper is what Rochefort calls *une feuille soumise*, and is edited from the prefecture of his department. In some cases the provincial printer and publisher carries on the publication of a weekly or bi-weekly organ with no other object in view than to lease out its columns to any local politician whose temporary ambitions may



make it necessary for him to have a representative organ in the district for a certain period. One could name a score of such provincial papers in France which change their political colour as may be dictated by the business manager and his contracts.

A year or two ago an amusing case was tried in the French courts, which shows how entirely the provincial newspaper proprietor looks upon the political opinions expressed in his paper as a matter of business. In this case the Royalist senator Monsieur Provost de Launay was the plaintiff, and the proprietor of a certain local newspaper was the defendant. The statement of claim set forth that by an agreement between the parties the plaintiff had hired the whole front page of the paper in question, to be filled with matter advocating his political views and advertising his personal merits. The defendant had kept his bargain, but had subsequently leased out the third page for the same purposes to the Government candidate, Monsieur de Launay's opponent. On the front page the paper was Royalist, on the third page it was Republican. The Court held that the publisher was quite within his rights in disposing of his space to the best advantage to himself.

Many provincial papers of this class are edited from Paris. The editor never visits the place of publication. I remember how a friend of mine, an unsuccessful dramatic author, developed into a person of affluence. He had been engaged to edit from Paris a paper devoted to the political interests of a local politician. He did the thing so well from Paris that the paper actually was made to pay. The townsmen declared that never had their local interests been better defended. I used to see him writing his leaders in the Café de la Sorbonne, and he claimed that it was instinct which prompted him

ever to take up the popular side in any local question. "For instance," I once heard him say, "the townspeople are divided on the question of spending a large sum of money on improving their water supply. It is obvious that the drinking of too much water is an abuse—bad for the health, contrary to the best interests of the Republic, and must injure the trade of the vine-growers and *marchands de vins*. I therefore oppose the scheme. Garçon, un bock!"

On the other hand, when René Leclerc, the poor poet to whom I have already alluded, went to Savoy to edit the paper of a candidate in one of the towns there, his career was as short as that of another poet, Charles Baudelaire, under similar circumstances. On the day of Baudelaire's arrival in the town in which the new paper was to appear, he was entertained at dinner by the committee of shareholders, and during the dinner never once opened his mouth. When towards the end of the banquet his silence was commented upon, he replied, "You have brought me down here to be the lackey of your intelligence. I am not paid to talk to you." And the next day, on visiting the printing-office, he horrified the printer's wife by asking first of all, as the most important point to be considered, "Where do you keep the editorial brandy-bottle?"

In considering the small amount of capital which is considered sufficient in Paris to start a daily paper, it must be remembered that foreign news is still the service to which French editors pay the least attention. Ville-messant, the founder of the *Figaro*, had an absolute contempt for foreign news. "The Parisian," he used to say, "is far more interested in an account of how a dog was run over in the Chaussée d'Antin than in the fall of a dynasty abroad." The best Parisian paper in

his days was, as he demonstrated, the paper which gave the fullest local news.

In England, of course, we take, or are presumed to take, enormous interest in foreign affairs, and the result is that newspaper proprietors have to spend very large sums on this service. I remember speaking with a London newspaper proprietor, who told me that on starting his paper he had calculated upon spending a quarter of a million sterling before he should "turn the corner." "As a matter of fact," he added, "I had to spend much more than that; for we started at a time when there were three wars going on, and thousands of pounds weekly had to be paid out for foreign correspondence."

Of late, however, there has been a marked change in French journalism in this respect, and some enterprise is being shown in the matter of foreign news. Some of the Parisian papers now do send correspondents to the front; but these are allowed to proceed in a leisurely way. The editor seems to prefer to receive a well-written account of a battle months after the event, than to "scoop" the news of a victory. I was much amused a few days ago by reading the remarks with which a correspondent in Tokio explained why he had not been sending much news for some time previously. He described the voluptuous atmosphere of the extreme East, and deplored the enervating effects of the climate and the other seductions of Japan—all so hostile to literary work. I imagined the face of a news editor in New York or in London on reading such a message from a correspondent at the front, and could see before me as plain as print that news editor's prescription for curing this want of tone.

As a matter of fact, the French newspaper reader

cares little or nothing for foreign news. He has no notion of geography; he does not know where the places are which are mentioned under the heading of "Etranger." My housekeeper is a very intelligent woman, who can write an admirable business letter and knows all about French affairs; but she has no more idea as to the position of Belgium or of Switzerland than I have of the inner architecture of the Forbidden City in Peking. The other day she asked me if Scotland were an island! What your French newspaper reader turns to first is the *Faits-divers*, or local news. But his primary object in buying the paper is to read the *feuilleton*, or serial story. Monsieur Cassigneul, the manager of the *Petit Journal*, insisted upon this in a long conversation I once had with him in his room at the office of the paper. "Our serials have an immense effect on the sale of our paper," he said. "Most of our million purchasers buy the paper for the sake of the *feuilleton* alone; so we pay high prices to our novelists. I think that Xavier de Montépin received the highest price we have ever paid for a serial—namely, £2,800."

I remember asking Monsieur de Montépin about his gains, and he said that, in addition to the seventy thousand francs paid him for that particular story by the *Petit Journal*, he had received £2,000 more from the firm of Jules Rouff & Co. for the right of reproducing it in weekly numbers, and that this firm had spent £8,000 in advertising those weekly numbers. De Montépin, who was a fine aristocratic old gentleman, lived in a splendid mansion in Passy, which was filled with the most expensive and most worthless of modern pictures. He was very proud of his name and family, and his greatest pleasure in life was to ride in the Bois. He told me that he had been successful from the very first, and that he had

written five hundred novels, which had all paid exceedingly well. He hoped to live to write as many more.

Another writer of serial stories who made a large fortune was Emile Richebourg. At one time he was a clerk in the office of the Société des Gens de Lettres, and had been impressed with the large sums of money which he had had to pay over the counter to the authors of popular fiction who came to the office to receive their *droits d'auteur*. "I was curious to see," he once told me, as we were lunching together in his villa at Bougival, "what sort of stuff it was that brought in such huge royalties, and I set myself the task of reading some of these serials. I came to the conclusion that I could write as well myself, and in the evenings, after office hours, I worked at a story. It was submitted to the *Petit Journal*, and was accepted, and my reputation and fortune were made."

The reader for the *Petit Journal* was the wife of Monsieur Marinoni. Marinoni, who rose to great wealth, had started in life as a workman in a printing office. His wife was a woman of the people. As the *Petit Journal* appealed to the people, Marinoni decided that his wife would be the best taster that he could find for the stories submitted for his acceptance. Madame Marinoni had an excellent *flair* in this field, and it is said that she would recommend no serial, in the course of reading which she had not been moved to tears at least once in every seven instalments.

To-day there are a large number of men making big incomes by work of this kind. I was introduced not long ago, at one of the best clubs in Paris, to a retired army officer—a most distinguished man—whose interests in life seemed to be exclusively confined to sport. I was afterwards told of him that he was earning eighty thousand



francs a year by writing sensational fiction for the Parisian papers, and that by dictating his matter to a typist he was always free of his daily task before lunch. I do not think that many members of the club where I met him have any idea of the source whence he derived his big income. He had not the childish vanity of Eugene Sue, who disgusted the members of the Jockey Club with his boastings about the amounts he could earn with his pen, and who used to sit in the smoking-room of that select assembly correcting the proofs of his *Wandering Jew*.

During my life in Paris I have been brought into contact with most of the editors of the Parisian press. At a very early stage in my career I was invited by one editor to contribute on English and American subjects to his paper, a journal which was originally founded by Victor Hugo. I need hardly say with what pride I trod the boulevards that evening. My satisfaction was, however, to be short-lived, for in the course of my walk I fell in with a well-known Parisian *chroniqueur*, who, when I had told him of Mr. L——'s offer, cried out, "Have nothing to do with him. Don't put yourself into that robber's cave." Then he led me to a passage which ran alongside the building in which the offices of the paper were situated, and pointed out to me a door which opened directly on to a steep flight of steps. "That," he said, "is the staircase down which Mr. L—— comes whenever any of his contributors go to the office by the front door for their payment." A little later we met Aurélien Scholl—it was my introduction to him—and he cried out, "Mr. L——! Why, when I deliver a manuscript to him I hold it out with my left hand whilst stretching out my right, and I don't leave go of the manuscript until he has handed me the price agreed upon."

In Paris, by the way, the staff and contributors are

never paid by post. One is expected to go once a week or once a month to the cashier's office and get one's money, just as the "liners" do in Fleet Street. Even the great men on the press have to follow this rule, and you may see at the cash-office the world-known *chroniqueur* languidly pocketing his thousand-franc notes side by side with the occasional reporter, who is eagerly picking up the pence for so many lines at a halfpenny a line. I remember how, after my first contribution to a Parisian newspaper had appeared, I was surprised at receiving no cheque. I wrote to the manager, but my letter was left without an answer. Finally I presented myself at the cash-office, and inquired why my money had not been forwarded. The system was then explained to me. "Your money has been waiting for you here for some weeks," said the cashier, pushing over an envelope to me and handing me a book in which to sign. "You will find the amount correct—three hundred and sixteen lines at threepence a line." I don't think that the receipt of money ever gave me more pleasure. I felt myself indeed a worker, a proletarian—a man who for work done was receiving his wage. It is a pleasure to sign a pay-sheet. It seems to invest one with dignity. It dispels that feeling which sometimes haunts the writer, that he is but a parasite on the body social.

Mr. L—— was an exception among Parisian editors, as I found them. I have spoken of my first meeting with Magnard. When I knew him better I lost all feeling of grievance against him. He was, indeed, rather a kindly hearted man, but rough and without manners. I used to be amused at the terror in which he always stood of De Villemessant long after his chief's death. It reminded me of that passage in *Vanity Fair*, where Thackeray describes how an old gentleman of

sixty-eight came down to breakfast one morning pale and scared, and said, "I dreamt last night that I was birched by Dr. X——." Magnard often said to me, "I keep wondering whether De Villemessant is satisfied. We often say, 'What a good thing it is that there is no telephone from the other world! He would always be ringing us up. He was very particular, very difficult to please. His strictness applied to other things besides our work. He used to insist that we should be as careful about our dress as about our work. We all have a religious respect for his principles, and try to please him, though he is no more. In the old days, when anything in the paper pleased him, he used to cut it out and pin it up on that board to serve as a model to the others.'"

The last time when I met Magnard was at the breakfast given to Zola on the island in the Bois de Boulogne on the occasion of the completion of the Rougon-Macquart series of novels. At that time Villemessant's paper was still at the height of its prosperity. The shares then stood at more than double their present value. It was the attitude taken up during the *Affaire Dreyfus* which brought about the downfall of the *Figaro*. But Magnard did not live to see the decline of the paper which was, under his *régime*, the foremost journal on the Continent. It is not likely that, even under its present very able management, the *Figaro* will ever regain its former position; people do not care to pay three-halfpence for a paper when they can get a journal of the same size and as full of news for a third of that sum.

All the leading papers in Paris, with the exception of the *Figaro* and the *Gaulois* and one or two other obscure sheets, are now published at the popular price. The paper also owed much of its former success to the popularity of individual writers who used to contribute to

it exclusively—Albert Wolff, Adrien Marx, and others ; and as their numbers decreased one by one, and it was found impossible to replace them, the success of the paper declined.

From a newspaper proprietor's point of view there is a great deal to be said for anonymity of articles. It is the standing rule in the *Petit Journal*, the *Temps*, and some other papers, where none but the occasional contributors are allowed to sign their work. The editor of the *Petit Journal* told me that the rule was adopted after the proprietors quarrelled with Léo Lespés. "Léo Lespés," said Monsieur Escoffier, "was engaged to write a leading article daily. He used to sign as 'Timothy Trimm.' It was a kind of literary *tour de force*, which amused and interested the public. People used to say that it was impossible for one man to write an article every day, and so Lespés used to write his leaders in public places, in *cafés* and restaurants, where people could see him at work. The interest shown turned his head : he fancied that he was indispensable to the paper, that without him the *Petit Journal* could not exist. In consequence, his pretensions became so exorbitant that the proprietors found it advisable to get rid of him. Since his time all the leading articles have been signed 'Thomas Grimm,' but that covers a great number of contributors."

I remember that on that occasion Monsieur Escoffier gave me some interesting details about the financial side of the journal. He said that the paper could get along very well without the huge revenues obtained from its advertisement columns, for the sales produced a net daily profit of £1,400. The advertisements brought in a similar daily revenue. Since those days the *Petit Parisien* has largely encroached on the popularity of



the *Petit Journal*, and the reason alleged is that by printing in smaller type it gives more matter and fuller local news. Both papers have a circulation well over a million.

Such a circulation is, however, less curious than the other extreme. I refer to the political dailies, whose printing average falls well below five hundred copies a day. It was said of Charles Laurent's *Le Jour* that it never reached a total sale of three hundred copies. Clémenceau's *La Justice* had a very small sale. The *Siècle*, under the editorship of Yves Guyot, had no circulation at all; it was not even to be found at the kiosques. Yet the editors of these papers seemed to thrive. One knows that the Minister of the Interior has a fund from which he subsidizes journalists who support the Government, but the question is why it should be thought worth while to subsidize newspapers which are read, if read at all, by so few people. In point of vitality these papers are only one degree higher in the scale than the many papers to which, though they are dead, a periodical semblance of existence is given.

There is a publisher in Paris who, just before the last number of any paper is about to appear, comes forward with the offer of a trifling sum for the copyright of the title. This man keeps alive, as far as is requisite for the purposes of retaining the ownership of the title, all the dead newspapers of Paris. In the obscurity and silence of his printing-house there is given, at the rarest intervals, a faint semblance of existence to papers which once filled Paris with the clamour of their names. Of each journal the fewest possible number of copies is printed. The contents are the same in one and all. Republican and Royalist, Bonapartist and Socialistic papers which in their old days on earth



fought each other tooth and nail seem reconciled in the peace and quiet of this living grave.

To this limbo departed long ago that famous champion of General Boulanger's cause, *La Cocarde*. No paper roared more lustily in the streets of Paris than this. I knew its editor well, Terrail-Mermeix. His name may be remembered as author of *Les Coulistes du Boulangisme*. I had long been interested in his career before I got to know him. His was a notable figure on the boulevards. He used to dress so as to resemble Emile de Girardin. He started by being a Legitimist and a writer on Royalist papers; and because the Republican journals would have none of him when his convictions changed, he went over to Boulanger. He told me that Ranc had told him in the lobby of the Chamber that "the Republic is a corner," and that no journalist who had been connected with Royalist papers would be trusted or admitted on to the Republican press.

Mermeix was charged with ingratitude for betraying the secrets of Boulangism. He used indignantly to repudiate the charge. He declared that he was indebted in no way to the General or to his party; that for the very expenses of his election he had had to indebt himself to the extent of eleven thousand francs; that the publishing of the articles was not a literary speculation, inasmuch as he had sold the whole series to the *Figaro* for the trifling sum of £80. He professed that his motive had been to do an act of justice. He described the General as a traitor, and gave me particulars of a conversation which he had overheard at the house of the Duchess d'Uzès, and which, he said, first opened his eyes to the fact that the Boulangist movement was a gigantic conspiracy against the Republic. His action was not approved

of in Paris, and after the publication of *Les Coulisses* he disappeared from the ranks of Parisian journalists. I used to meet him occasionally afterwards, and he told me that he held some post under Government, which often took him abroad.

I was with him on the night when he was elected a member of Parliament, and saw the tears in his eyes. After that he used often to show me his deputy's silver medal, and say that it was what he was proudest of in the world. In those days he used to say that his highest ambition would be realized if he could reach the post of Prefect of Police. His adversaries afterwards said that he had qualifications. It is quite possible that some day his ambitions may be realized. Even stranger things have come to pass in the French political world.

Another Royalist editor whom I knew, who did not change his convictions, and who lived and died faithful to his cause, was Henri de Pène, one of the most refined gentlemen that I have ever met in Parisian society. He enjoyed the profound respect of journalists of every party. At the time of his death he was editor of the *Gaulois*. He died in 1888, after a career of forty years. He was the "Nemo" of the *Figaro* in its early days. In 1858 he attracted universal notice to himself by a duel which at the time created a great sensation. Having put his antagonist *hors de combat*, he was insulted by one of the latter's seconds, and then and there fought a second duel, in which the tide of fortune turned against him and in which he was very seriously wounded. He was the author of some novels and of a history of *Henri V.* I used to see him at the office of his paper, the *Clairon*, which he edited simultaneously with the *Gaulois*. It was a Royalist paper and a failure.

In my early days in Paris there were many personalities

amongst the Parisian pressmen. To-day, with the exception of Rochefort and Drumont, they have all disappeared, and even Drumont is a newcomer, whom I can remember very far from prosperous. In those days each paper was some one man. The *Rappel* was Vacquerie, the *Autorité* was Paul de Cassagnac, the *République Française* was Reinach, just as the *Intransigeant* is Rochefort. At present, excepting the *Intransigeant* and the *Libre Parole*, one associates no papers in France with single individuals. This may arise from the prudence of the capitalist, but I attribute it rather to the fact that for the journalists of this generation in France there has been no such training as moulded the great men who were at the head of the profession when I first came to Paris. There is no better professor of journalism in the world than a press censor. All the fine writers to whom I refer had been brought up in their profession under the Empire when the censorship of the press was rigorously carried out. There was no hurried writing in those days. Men had to think; they had to turn their pens seven times in their hands before writing down an opinion, and, whilst seeking so to convey their meaning that they could say all they wished to say and yet keep clear of Ste. Pélagie, they cultivated style. Nowadays, when a man may say anything he writes hurriedly, with a typewriting machine as often as not.

I have spoken of my acquaintance with Vacquerie, whom I used to meet at Victor Hugo's house. He was a dear old gentleman, the mildest Revolutionary whom I have ever seen. I must say, though, that I have never yet met a professional Revolutionary who was not the mildest of men in his private capacity. Opposition seemed to have paid well in Vacquerie's case, for when

he died he was a very rich man. He had begun life in the cottage of a fisherman in Brittany. I sometimes used to visit him in his house, a splendid mansion in Passy, which was filled with priceless art treasures. I will not say that I felt any resentment against Vacquerie for living in such style while preaching the equality of men and the infamy of capitalists, for he was a kind and benevolent old man; but it certainly did open my eyes to the farce of professional Socialism.

I have always had great admiration for Rochefort, and it is a sorrow to me that his character, owing to constant malicious representations, is entirely misunderstood in England. He is the most lovable of men. I know few men who have kinder hearts. Nobody should judge him until he has read his memoirs of his life. And there he does not give one by any means a full conception of his kindness to all who are poor or weak or unfortunate. His charity is boundless. While he was living in England one of the servant-girls in his employment got into trouble. The time came when she had to confess her condition to her master. It was with fear and trembling that she did so, for she knew how in England such things are regarded by Christian employers. She expected to be flung into the street, with the Thames or the workhouse or Newgate as her destination. Rochefort merely asked who was the father of the child, and when he heard that it was one of his own men-servants he sent for the man and talked him into marrying the girl at once. He paid for the wedding, and kept the married couple in his employment. Some time later he adopted a little English girl whose father had been hanged, and who was an outcast waif in London. It is to Rochefort that every Socialist who is in straits applies for money. In his private life he is the most sober and

abstemious of men. I have heard him represented in England as a debauchee, a man of riotous living. There is no man less so. His extraordinary brilliancy of intellect needs no demonstration. His articles in the *Intransigeant* are as clever and amusing as ever they were when thirty-five years ago he was battering down the throne of the third Napoleon. He is violently attacked in Paris, by none more so than by Socialists who belong to a different group than his. These delight in writing of him as "le Marquis." The fact is that he has the nature and the feelings of the gentleman. There can be no doubt whatever of the sincerity of his Socialism, and this is what enrages the pseudo-humanitarians who attack him. Yet I am sure that there is no man in Paris who wishes any ill to befall him and who would not mourn his loss. One does not like to think of Paris without our Rochefort.

A man we still miss in Paris is Aurélien Scholl. We shall never see his like again. He belonged to the old school of *chroniqueurs*, whose occupation has quite gone, as Parisian newspapers are to-day. He was one of the wittiest of men. I used to see him often for some years before his death, and during Zola's first visit to London I was much in his company. Like Magnard and Fernand Xau, he felt in London that he had only been brought over to swell Zola's triumph, and speedily returned to Paris. I remember taking him one day from the Savoy Hotel to look at Newgate. I shall never forget Scholl's look, as through his single eyeglass he examined the fetters which used to hang over the entrance to the prison. The antithesis between the man and the building was as strong in its way as that described by Hugo in his *Quatre-Vingt-Treize*. It was the rapier wondering at the steam-hammer. It was Gavroche cocking his eye



at the Bastille. It was the wit and tolerance of the Parisian boulevardier, the kindness which a knowledge of the world brings with it, aghast at the spectacle of that monument to dull, unreasoning cruelty. I told him of the things which still went on within those gloomy walls; I showed him where in old days the gallows used to stand, and pointed to the door through which, at the beginning of the century, some years after the French Revolution, Phœbe Harris was brought out to be burned alive at the stake for passing a spurious two shilling-piece. "B-r-r-r!" he exclaimed. "Let us get away from here," and hurried off ejaculating sounds of horror and disgust. He did not quite recover until we had reached Ludgate Hill.

Here, as we turned our faces west, he asked me if I knew the story of the benevolent Israelite and the poor woman who could not afford to get her child christened. "It was outside a Catholic Church in Warsaw," he continued. "The wealthy Israelite was passing by when he saw a poor woman who was holding a child in her arms, and who was weeping bitterly. 'My poor woman,' he said, 'what is it that ails you?' The woman said, 'I wanted to have this child baptized, and I brought it to the church; but the priest says that he will not christen it unless I pay him a rouble.' 'Ah! I see; and you have no money?' 'That is so,' said the woman, and began to cry again. 'Well,' said the benevolent stranger, 'I do not hold myself with christenings and such-like, but I don't care to see a poor woman crying for the want of such a trifle as a rouble or two, and for once I don't mind going against my convictions. Here, good woman, I find I have no small notes, so take this twenty-rouble note, get your child christened, and bring me back the change. I will wait for you round

yonder corner.' Some time later the woman returned, radiant, and handed him the change of the twenty-rouble note. 'Now,' he said, 'we are all happy and contented: you, because your child has been baptized; the priest, because he has earned a rouble; and I, because I am nineteen roubles to the good, as the twenty-rouble note was a forgery.'" Scholl added that most of the stories about Jewish sharpness are invented by the Jews themselves. I hardly believed him at the time; but some time later, in connection with a Purim competition started by a Jewish paper in London, where a prize was offered for the best specimen of Jewish humour, I noticed it was to a story of similar roguery that the competitors were referred to as the model of the stories wanted.

On our way back to the Savoy we went into the Gaiety bar, and as we sat at one of the tables there Scholl talked of a recent duel in Paris. He was the great Parisian authority on the *point d'honneur*, and to him used to be submitted for arbitration any knotty point which might arise between seconds in arranging the conditions of an encounter. He was a very determined advocate of duelling, and used to say that it was the easiest and best way of settling certain disputes. I have always held that there is much to be said in favour of duelling. The mere fact that the possibility of having to fight a duel some day obliges every young Frenchman to learn and practise fencing, than which no better exercise for the eye, the wrist, the muscles and the nerves, can be imagined, is a decided point in its favour. In England duelling as practised in France is habitually derided. A reproach is made against duellists that their encounters do not often end fatally. It is rarely desired that they should do so. For the rest, in civilian circles in England

the spirit of chivalry is very weak. Is there any other country in the world where a husband accepts as a solatium for his outraged honour the damages in money awarded by a divorce court? I have often wondered what the man does with the money so acquired, and under what heading he enters it on the credit side of his banking account.

But it was on re-reading Stevenson's *Kidnapped* the other day that I was particularly impressed with the extent to which the spirit of chivalry has been swamped in England by commercialism. Stevenson depicts for us in Alan Stuart Breck an ideal type of the chivalrous soldier, whose pride and self-esteem were almost morbid in degree, whose soul was the soul of honour. Yet, as far as I can remember, not a single protest was raised by the readers of this book when the author involved this Alan Breck in a dirty eavesdropping transaction which would have disgraced the least scrupulous of private detectives. I refer to where Alan Breck cheerfully and without a moment's hesitation consents to entrap David Balfour's old uncle into the confession of his misdeeds, whilst the hero of the story, his lawyer and the lawyer's clerk, are waiting in ambush to overhear the confession. I protest that Alan, as he had been described to us, would have stooped to no such complacencies. At the suggestion that he, an officer and a gentleman, should lend himself to such work, he would have laid the flat of his sword over the shoulders of that very impudent lawyer.

I remember meeting Scholl with Zola and others of the Parisian party in London at the Café Royal just after they had returned from the Guildhall, where they had met the provincial mayors. Zola was much impressed with the robes and metal adornments of the civic fathers,



*Photo by permission of "La France Contemporaine," Paris.*

MADAME ADAM  
(JULIETTE LAMBER).





but what had most struck Scholl was the efficacy of the whistles used for calling up the carriages by the porters. He asked me to procure him such a whistle, which he said would amaze the Parisian *chasseurs*.

He was so singularly shortsighted that one wonders how he managed ever to come unscathed out of any of the many duels in which he engaged. *Apropos* of his sight, he was one day complaining that his eyeglass was practically of no use to him. "Why don't you take the next number at the optician's," he was asked. "The next number," he retorted, "is a poodle." I should explain that in Paris poodles are most generally used for leading the blind. His was a familiar figure on the boulevards, and one misses it sadly. I rarely saw him when he was unaccompanied, and usually his companion was some pretty woman. The prettiest women in Paris seemed proud to take his arm. He died at Etampes, so changed as to be unrecognisable. He had a great fondness for that country town. He said that it was the nearest spot to Paris where in the spring one could hear the cuckoo call, and added that, out of consideration for the married men of the capital, that thoughtful bird came no closer to town.

I have to thank Madame Juliette Adam for many acts of kindness and hospitality during my life in Paris. At one time I used to attend her receptions in the Rue Juliette Lamber with some regularity, and at the period when she was thinking of writing her memoirs, I endeavoured to arrange for their publication in England. That has been done since with more success. Like most people who have great talents, she is simple, kindly, and unaffected. She once did me the kindness of reviewing at great length one of my books on social questions in England. It should not be forgotten of her that she

was the literary godmother of Pierre Loti and Paul Bourget.

It was at her house that Jeanne Hugo, then the wife of Léon Daudet, pointed out to me another Parisian lady, remarkable in a very different way. Jeanne touched my arm and asked me to look at a fat, little, old gentleman in evening clothes who was standing close to us. "What a strange-looking little man!" I whispered. "It isn't a man at all," said Madame Léon Daudet; "it's Madame Dieulafoy, the traveller and writer."

## CHAPTER XXII

The Quartier Latin—A Hopeless Mode of Existence—Victor Considérant—Jean Moréas—His Duel with Darzens—The Poet and the Washerwoman—The Fate of Maurice Rollinat—René Leclerc—Verlaine and Bibi-la-Purée—Laurent Tailhade—A Successful Phrase—Marcel Schwob and Hugues Rebell—Stephane Mallarmé—A Matrimonial Proposal—W. T. Peters—Stuart Merrill—Raoul Ponchon—Those who have Resisted—Paul Adam—Henri de Régnier—Maurice Barrés—Pierre Louys—The Writing of "Aphrodite"—The Regret of an Academician.

FROM the Greater Bohemia let me pass reluctantly to Bohemia the Less. Reluctantly, for here indeed to remember is to mourn. How fully do I now appreciate, as I conjure up before my eyes my memories of that Bohemian land, the Latin Quarter, the horror with which Alphonse Daudet used to speak of the destructive life that is led there! I have watched this Latin Quarter life for twenty years, and of the men whom I came to know there, none but the very fewest have escaped what is the logical conclusion of an existence in which every rule of physical and mental hygiene is violated. In the course of those twenty years I have witnessed the ruin in body and soul of more men than I care to think of. As to the poor women, pale and gracious phantoms which flit before my eyes as I look back upon all those years, it is in the social order of things that one inquire not too closely into what their fates may have been. They come, they smile, they go, and at the

lower end of the broad highway of the Bohemian land the hospitable Seine flows on.

The men to whom I refer as having been destroyed by this existence are such as tried to imitate the heroes of Murger's poisonous book (as Daudet used to call it) to combine an artistic career with the low debauchery to which at every step modern Bohemia panders. The words "The Latin Quarter life" are in this sense generic, and equally well describe the hopeless mode of existence which is led in other parts of Paris also. It is a wilful shutting of the eyes to the physiological fact that no life is more exacting or more jealous than the artistic life, be the man's pursuit that of letters, or of music, painting, or the other arts; and that to endeavour to tax the brain chronically, while debilitating the body by every calculated and scientific means, is to court inevitable disaster. Since the days portrayed in *la Vie de Boheme*, the Latin Quarter has become more and more a place of danger for the young. In Murger's time wine usually, and punch on opulent and therefore rare occasions, used to be drunk there. Who shall enumerate the list of alcoholic poisons which to-day have been substituted for sake of greater gains by rapacious purveyors? At the "green hour" one may see mere boys in any Latin Quarter *café* drinking absinthe—to mention this alone—with all the familiarity and conviction of old soldiers of the army of Africa. And of absinthe there is only this to be said, that it is composed of fourteen distinct poisons, and that its chronic use invariably leads to paralysis in one dreadful form or another. As to the other temptations which here make for perdition, the other dangers which encompass the imprudent, the same degeneration may be observed. The *grisette* of Murger's days is by no means dead, as it pleases so many superficial students

of Parisian social life to say ; but habits of intemperance are fatal to domestic life even in morganatic alliances.

When I first came to Paris there were still to be found men in the Latin Quarter to meet whom it was worth one's while to cross the bridges. It was there that I made the acquaintance of Victor Considérant, then a very old man, who was one of the few sincere Socialists whom I have ever met. Considérant was a disciple of Fourier, a member of the phalansterian school, and one of the founders of the Fourierist colony in America. He had sacrificed to his principles a large personal fortune. When I met this splendid old man in Paris he was living in proud and honoured poverty in two small rooms in the Rue Gay-Lussac. His convictions were as strong in him as ever. His deceptions, the successive desertions of his comrades-in-arms, the disillusionments which ever wait upon the true humanitarian, had in no degree dispelled his magnificent confidence in Socialism as the road to perfect human happiness. He delighted in having young men about him to whom he could expound his theories, to whom he could communicate his warm enthusiasm. He was too poor to receive his friends at his lodgings, but we used to meet him at the Café de la Sorbonne. He was a welcome and honoured guest there, though he never asked for anything beyond a glass of water.

At the Café Vachette, opposite, I first made the acquaintance of Jean Moréas. That was twenty years ago. When I desire to meet him to-day it is still there that I go to look for him. He is one of the men who, delighting in the freedom of the Latin Quarter life, has managed to steer through all its pitfalls. But he has always been too true a poet to succumb to the ugly things of life. Already when I first made his acquaintance



he was spoken of amongst *les jeunes* as one of the master-poets of France. To-day official recognition of his genius has been awarded to him, and the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour adorns his buttonhole. He has never lived for anything but for his art. In former days he had, I believe, against adversity and the opposition of his family, the same struggle that Wordsworth had. He lived in the very poorest way, entirely absorbed in his verse. In those days he was a confirmed night-walker. To avoid the crowds which throng the streets by day, and to find in the silence and the inspiration of the night the atmosphere which is wanting in towns in the day-time, he used only to go out at nights. One might meet him at any hour after dark, mouthing his verses as he walked along. Many of his beautiful poems were composed in this way. An Athenian by birth, he will rank high in French literature.

I once acted as second to Moréas in a sword duel, and I much admired the pluck with which he fought. His adversary was Rodolphe Darzens, who has since developed into a prosperous sporting journalist whose speciality is to write about the motor-boat. Moréas and he had several encounters. In the duel in which I acted, Darzens' seconds were the poet Ephraim Mikhael and Jacques Madeleine. Mikhael was a Jew, a poet of the rarest distinction. He died quite young, and it was the universal opinion of literary France that a great loss to literature had been sustained. He had a face of that singular beauty which Nature often bestows on those who are not to be long of this world; and I remember that I was more often looking at him than an attentive second should have done. The article which Catulle Mendés wrote about him after his death was one of the finest pieces of prose that even Mendés ever wrote.

The master saluted in Mikhael one of the greatest poets he had known. It was not friendship which dictated this eulogy. Mendés is the severest of critics. One still remembers how, on the occasion of the funeral of his son, Raphael Mendés, the father, during a halt in the procession, was heard to say to those around, speaking of the dead man, "Ah! he was a very bad painter." As to Jacques Madeleine, he has since taken an honourable place amongst French writers. As to the gentleman who acted with me for Moréas, a man named Tissandier, I think that the only claim to notoriety that distinguished him was that during the Boulangist agitation he had owned and edited a paper called the *Sifflet*, with each copy of which was presented a whistle wherewith to hoot at the General in the streets. The encounter took place at the Hermitage at Villebon, and resulted in the defeat of Darzens. The two men fought with surprising energy for over an hour. It was a stimulating spectacle, full of interest.

In those days I used to meet also another poet who enjoys much distinction in the Parisian Parnassus. I feared that he was killing himself. He had so acquired the absinthe habit that he used to take the poisonous stuff in everything that he drank. On more than one occasion I had to assist in moving him home after he had fallen down in an epileptic fit, which is one of the earlier effects of excessive absinthe drinking. Then, one day, he declared that he had had enough of that life, and retired to the country. We heard that he had been forced to do so by his lady-love, who was a washer-woman of great beauty and much strength of character. She took her poet to a place many miles away from Paris, married him, and made him settle down into a peaceful and orderly bourgeois. It was indeed reported

that he had become a municipal councillor in his little town. His literary activity returned to him, and ever since those days we have had in his work the proof of the advantages of the simple life.

It was the simple life, also, which saved poor Rollinat at a time when his friends were despairing of him. I met Rollinat in 1883 for the first time. It was shortly after he had published a terrible volume of poems, which seemed to have been inspired by Edgar Allan Poe. The poet, from what he told me, seemed to be modelling his life also on that of his unhappy master. It was drugs, absinthe; absinthe, drugs. In the very nick of time he fled from Paris. In the country he recovered his health; his genius developed; and both as a poet and as a musician he did splendid work for years. Of his tragic end I hardly like to think. I hardly like to think of it, because when I do think of it inquietude assails me. There were three of us together in a room at the Hôtel Voltaire on the last occasion before he left Paris, when I was in Rollinat's company, and of those three two came to miserable ends. One of them was the poet Oscar Wilde; Maurice Rollinat was the other.

Rollinat's fate was the most horrible that one can conceive—far more horrible than any destiny which even he had ever conceived in his most morbid hours. His wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, was bitten by a pet dog at a time when there was hydrophobia in their country district. She did not wish to frighten her husband, and so told him nothing about the accident, but waited for an opportunity of going to Paris to be attended to at the Pasteur Institute. It was some time before she could find a pretext for going to town, and by that time it was too late. Shortly after her return home from Paris she was attacked by the horrible disease,

and died in the cruel torments which it brings, before her husband's eyes. The sudden shock of this catastrophe was too great for the poor fellow. He was stricken down with paralysis, and after lingering for some weeks, a living corpse, died in the full bloom of his genius.

Compared to this fate, the end of René Leclerc, better known in French literature as René de la Villoyo, was almost a merciful one. Leclerc was the young poet whom I first met at the *table d'hôte* in the Rue Champollion, where I made the acquaintance of Joseph Aubert, the murderer. In those days he was studying medicine with a view to becoming an army surgeon; but his head was full of Murger's nonsense, and his ambitions were to attain fame as a poet while leading the life of a *viveur* in the Latin Quarter. He was often in the company of Paul Verlaine, and used to pledge the master in long draughts of absinthe. His parents more than once tried to break him of his habits. I remember meeting him as he was leaving Paris to take up the editorship of a provincial paper in Savoy, a post which his father had procured for him.

Some years later he told me with tears in his eyes that he was forced to leave the *quartier*, that his father had cut off all supplies, and that he had the choice between starvation and accepting another post which had been procured for him. This was a situation as *greffier* or clerk to a county court judge in some small town in Brittany. I told him that it was the very best thing that could have happened to him; that in the calm and repose of the country life he would be able to do good work. All he found to say to me was that I had become an atrocious Philistine.

I heard nothing more of him until his suicide was

the talk of Paris. In almost every paper there appeared a long article from some literary celebrity, eulogising the dead poet's work; comparing him to Chatterton, and reviling his poor parents. In this last respect these articles were most cruel and unjust, for the poor old people had done everything that parents could do; and what, as it afterwards appeared, was the direct cause of his act of despair was that his father had refused to advance him a sum of nine thousand francs with which to bring out an *édition de luxe* of his works. He killed himself in a garret in the Rue Gay-Lussac by taking cyanide of potassium, and lay a corpse for some days before his body was discovered by his *concierge*. After his death I heard that he had been starving for a long time previously. A friend of mine told me that about three times a week Leclerc used to cross the river to come to his house and appeal to be allowed to take lunch with him, and that was all the food that the poor fellow had from one week's end to the other. I have wondered why he never came to me.

I am sorry that I ever met Paul Verlaine, for the remembrance of the devastation which had been wrought in the perishable body of that immortal genius must always be a poignant sorrow. My first sight of this great, simple, beautiful poet and child was in the basement of a *café* on the Place St. Michel, where there used to be singing, and where the poets gathered. Verlaine was drunk that night, and, as usual, was dressed in rags. He had a false nose on his face (for it was carnival time), and he was piping on a little tin whistle. The spectacle had the terrible comedy touch of Aristophanes. It was tragedy made grotesque. The man had the head and face of Socrates, and here we saw Socrates playing the buffoon. It was "the glory that was Greece"



swathed in the mire of the Paris gutter. I could not bear the sight, and hurried home.

The next occasion on which I saw him was at a dinner given in his honour by the readers of the literary paper, *La Plume*, then edited by the late Léon Deschamps, a man who rendered great services to the young *littérateurs* of Paris. Verlaine was childishly delighted with the honour shown him. Many of the greatest writers in France sat down to that mediocre feast, in proof of their esteem. Long, however, before the meal was over, Verlaine had sunk into a state of morose apathy. He grimaced, he wrinkled his lofty brows, and screwed up his eyes; and when any one spoke to him he pointed a finger. But he said nothing, and did not recover until, when the dinner was over, the strong waters were placed upon the table.

The circumstances of his death were a disgrace to Paris. He died in utter neglect and abandonment, amidst the most sordid surroundings. There were with him in his last days of suffering two outcast women and one outcast man. The outcast man begged for him, stole for him. Of the two women, as he used to say, one robbed him, the other loved him. He used to beat the one who loved him as long as he had the strength to do so. The greatest men in France followed his hearse to the grave; but his chiefest mourner was Bibi-la-Purée, the outcast man, who had closed his wistful and wondering eyes.

To think back upon those twenty years of observation of the Latin Quarter is to evoke little but tragic memories. And not a month passes almost but the papers bring to the quiet of my retreat news of the horrid way in which some fresh victim has fallen. Within the last month one has heard the dreadful

catastrophe which has befallen Laurent Tailhade.<sup>1</sup> I knew him well. I never met him elsewhere than in the Latin Quarter. To him belongs the honour of having pronounced a phrase which has become immortal in France, and which will live long after his many writings are forgotten.

It may be remembered that, by the irony of fate, this professing anarchist, whilst dining in luxury at Foyot's Restaurant, was wounded—blinded, indeed, of one eye—by the explosion of a bomb placed on the sill of one of the windows of the *café* by an anarchist who did not profess, but who acted. It was after he had recovered consciousness, and while the doctors were bending over his bleeding and mutilated form, that Tailhade said very quietly, "What does the deed matter, provided the gesture be a beautiful one?" This *pourvu que le geste soit beau* appealed to the French mind as no other famous saying ever yet appealed. To this heroic epigram were at once accorded its *grandes entrées* into the palace of the French tongue.

It was from the papers, again, that early in this summer I read of the early death of two other writers of great promise, Marcel Schwob and Hugues Rebell. With Schwob at one time I had had some intimacy of acquaintance. I used to meet him at Daudet's house, and he was a friend of Oscar Wilde's before the latter's misfortunes. It was Marcel Schwob who revised the French of *Salomé*. He had a fine knowledge of English; he translated *Moll Flanders*, and the *Francesca da Rimini* of Marion Crawford. It was he who first introduced Robert Louis Stevenson's works to the French public. I remember the exultation with which he discovered in *The Master of Ballantrae* a slip made by its author. It was where

<sup>1</sup> From which, since, he has made good recovery.

Stevenson describes a duel by night in midwinter, and relates how, after the encounter, one of the combatants runs his sword up to the hilt into the frozen ground. Schwob, though he was no swordsman, pointed out that it would be impossible to ram a sword to any distance into the frozen earth, and, very proud of his discovery, wrote to Stevenson to draw his attention to the error.

He never showed us Stevenson's reply, though as to many other letters which he had received from him he was always proud to display them. He had been the friend and disciple of Stéphane Mallarmé, and in his preface to his famous book *Le Roi au Masque d'Or* traces the history of that symbolism of language of which Mallarmé was the protagonist and Euphuës.

It was at the house of Stéphane Mallarmé that I first heard of Hugues Rebell. It was by this name that the young Breton gentleman, George Grassal, had elected to be known in French literature. Before his death he had invested his pseudonym with no small public esteem. In those days Mallarmé used to hold once a week a reception for his young literary friends in his small apartment in the Rue de Rome. One drank mild rum punch, and one listened to the master as he discoursed on art and literature. His discourses were couched in the symbolistic language, and I confess that I found it most hard to understand his meaning. At such times I used to divert myself by looking over his wonderful translation of Poe's *Raven*, which had been produced in a beautiful illustrated edition.

One night we separated very late. Some days afterwards we heard that that night, after our departure, Mallarmé, hearing a noise in his little kitchen, had gone in there, and had found seated on an overturned orange-box a young gentleman dressed in fashionable evening

clothes, who was sucking the gold knob of his dress-stick and who seemed in a state of much nervous trepidation. This was George Grassal, or Hugues Rebell. It appeared that having gone by mistake into the kitchen after his admission to Mallarmé's flat, he had not been able to muster up the courage to come into the dining-room where the reception was being held, and had patiently sat there for hours, too bashful to move. He was one of the most timid men I have ever met. In appearance he had "the timidity and archness of aspect of a very learned Benedictine monk." His eyes were at once sparkling and humble. He bore a strong resemblance to Ernest Renan.

After his death he was spoken of as one of the most delicate stylists of contemporary French literature. We became friends as soon as we had met. We came together very often. He did me the honour to admire my books, and in 1895 published in that important review the *Revue de Paris* a long essay entitled "Un Romancier Anglais," in which my career was described and my books were analysed. This essay he later on republished in a book called *Trois Artistes Étrangers*. It consecrated my position in Paris, and if, indeed, as it is said, "posterity begins at the frontier," I had reason to feel grateful to him. On my side I was able to introduce him to many of the great French writers. I presented him to Alexandre Dumas  *fils* , and I took him down to Champrosay, to make him known to Alphonse Daudet. We were excellent friends, and the only act for which, as I look back on our long intercourse, I have to reproach his memory is that when disaster came upon him he forgot me.

I had not heard of him for some months before his death, but I understood that he was living his usual life and that he was hard at work. I believe that one of his

last literary labours was to translate a small part of *Intentions* into French. I had no anxiety on account of not hearing from him. I believed him to be prosperous. I had always known him as a young man with a large private income, who used to dress in the height of fashion. He was not one of those men about whom his friends had any call to be anxious. We knew him to be sybaritic and epicurean, which implied that, in the common parlance, he took good care of himself.

In the notices which appeared in the papers after his death there was nothing to suggest the horrible end that had been his. Regret, indeed, was universally expressed for the loss of one of the most promising novelists and critics of the day, but that was all. Not long after I had read this announcement I met on the Boulevard St. Michel a mutual friend, a leader-writer on the *Temps*, who gave me some dreadful particulars about Rebell's death, and sent me to another friend, one of Rebell's publishers, for fuller information. I then learned that, some weeks before his death, entirely ruined, he had been forced to leave his beautiful apartment on the Boulevard des Batignolles, which from floor to ceiling in every room was upholstered with triple rows of books, and had been hiding from his creditors in a miserable lodging in the Marais Quarter. Hither he had been followed by a vile couple of Montmartre outcasts, who for a long time previous to his ruin had entirely subjugated the unhappy man. It was the story of Laurence Oliphant over again. The delicate and refined artist had sunk to be the submissive slave of a vulgar bully and his paramour. It was these people who had ruined him. It was said that he lived in mortal terror of them both, that they subjected him to violence, that the elegant dandy and erudite scholar had become their ill-used drudge.



His martyrdom was not to be of long duration. One day while wandering forlornly about the streets he fell down in a fit, and was removed by the police to the accident ward of the Hôtel Dieu. Here, after a short illness, he died. His taskmaster had discovered his whereabouts, and after Rebell's death concealed the fact, so as to have time to remove the few bits of property, books, and so forth, which the unfortunate young man had been able to save from the wreck of his home. His death was not known in Paris nor by his family until ten days after it had occurred. It was discovered by a mere accident. One of his publishers, who knew something about his condition, became anxious at not hearing from him, and looked up the *état-civil* registers, when the fact that Hugues Rebell had died in the ward of a hospital was disclosed. His family were able to regain possession of the body, which had escaped the dissecting-rooms, and carried it to his native Brittany for interment.

Mallarmé, who in his lifetime was the butt of the Philistines, has taken a high place in French literature. His influence on the young writers of his day was enormous. Many men now in the front ranks speak of the dead master with gratitude and affection. For my part, being a foreigner, I was not well able to understand his language or to profit by his lessons. I remember, as to his language, that once having asked him to lunch with Oscar Wilde and Jean Moréas at the Café Riche, he sent me in answer a pneumatic letter-card. I was totally unable to make out from its contents whether my invitation had been accepted or refused, and it was not until Mallarmé arrived at the *café* that I gathered that his involved phrases had implied an acceptance.

I remember asking him that day if the derivation of his name was not from the two words *mal* and



*Photo by Nadar, Paris.*

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ.



*armé*. Such an etymology of his name would have traced back his descent to warrior and chivalrous days, to some ill-armed knight who, in despite of his poor accoutrements, had perchance performed heroic deeds. I think it throws some light on his complex character that he repudiated the suggestion. “I have always held,” he said, “that my name derives from the two words *mal* and *larmé*—“the man of evil tears.” A little “preciosity” such as is instanced in this remark was his only failing. He was a very kind-hearted man and a sincere artist. Many of the pseudo-*littérateurs* who attended his receptions used to take cruel advantage of his good nature, for he was a poor man with no income beyond his salary as teacher of English in one of the public schools of Paris. He used sometimes to express anxiety as to the future of his only daughter—needless anxiety, as the event proved, for after his death a large, unexpected inheritance secured her independence.

As to this young lady, Mallarmé used to tell an amusing story. One winter's morning, very early, he was aroused out of bed by thundering knocks at his front door. Having admitted his visitor, he recognised in him a young provincial poet who had once attended one of his receptions, but whose name he had never known. To Mallarmé, shivering in his nightgown, the hirsute young man, without any preamble, made the following declaration: “Maitre, I love your daughter, and I have come to ask you for her hand.” Whilst Mallarmé, much taken aback, was stammering out that, though highly flattered, the hour seemed an unusual one for such a proposal, and that before he could give any answer he would naturally like to. . . ., the young man turned on his heel, rushed out of the room and headlong down the stairs. “And I never saw him again,” said Mallarmé, telling me

this story, "nor did I ever find out who he was or what was his name."

I think that I may say that apart from Jean Moréas and one or two other men, all the writers and artists whose acquaintance I first made in the Latin Quarter, and who used to frequent it, have come to disaster. Only a few days ago I heard of the death of W. T. Peters, the young American poet who used to be the friend of Ernest Dowson, and who lived his life in that most pernicious atmosphere. In his case I had had forewarning of disaster, for as some months ago I was wandering along the quays, turning over the books in the boxes of the secondhand dealers which are set out upon the parapet of the river, I had come across several books belonging to him, some bearing inscriptions from their authors. It is always a bad sign when a man of letters comes to sell his books, and I fancied that the poor *pierrrot*, whose portrait used to hang in the drawing-room in Tite Street, must have fallen upon wintry days. I heard, not long after, of his death from Monsieur Jean Joseph Renaud, the swordsman and author. He wrote to decline an invitation to my country retreat, and said, "I am at the bedside of W. Theodore Peters, the poet, who has not a friend in the world, except myself, my wife and his doctor, and who is dying."

Another American, who has won great distinction as a poet in the French tongue, Stuart Merrill, is one of the men who, though they have lived all their lives in the Latin Quarter, have avoided its dangers. He was one of the few men who remained faithful to Oscar Wilde after his downfall; it was he who, while Oscar Wilde was in prison, essayed to get up a petition amongst the great men of letters in Paris for his release.



Raoul Ponchon, who has lived in the Latin Quarter for over a quarter of a century, and whose acquaintance was one of the earliest which I made there, resists, to the joy of his friends and the delectation of his admirers, all the attacks which have felled so many of his contemporaries. But he is a man of Herculean strength, full of the vitality of one of the heroes of that Rabelais on whom he claims to have modelled his life and from whom in his verse he draws continual inspiration. He has realized what Theodore de Banville declared to be an impossibility, and is the one lyrical poet in Paris who earns his living by his pen. He contributes a "Gazette Rimée" to the *Journal*, in which one does not know which more to admire, the excellence of the technique of the versification, or the jubilant and Bacchic humour of his comments on the passing day. He has never published any work otherwise than in this fugitive manner, but for as long as I have known him it has been his little joke to announce the forthcoming appearance of his collected works.

These are, however, the rare exceptions. The men who have come to the front in the world of letters and who are now leading the delectable life of reputed authors and comfortable citizens, men like Paul Adam, Pierre Louys, Maurice Barrés, and Henri de Régnier are men who deserted the *quartier* altogether at a very early period, or whose appearance there has been of the rarest occurrence. Barrés, indeed, I never met in the Latin land. He has from the very first conducted his existence on an elevated plain, treading from adolescence the path which leads through mundane success to the French Academy. He has been a Boulangist deputy, a Nationalist, an anti-Dreyfusite, but never aggressively, nor otherwise than as a man

of the world. I have always seen him well dressed and a credit to his *coiffeur*.

Henri de Règnier, again, who is considered another *académisable* writer, used to make the rarest of appearances in the *quartier*. I have met him sometimes at the dinners of "La Plume," but I do not think that I ever saw him sitting in a *café* in any part of Paris. He is married to one of the daughters of de Hérédia, the Academician, and ranks as an aristocrat of letters.

Paul Adam, who has come to high honours in the Republic, and who must now be earning as large an income as any writer in France, seemed at one time to have been caught in the seductions of Bohemia the Lesser. I can remember when he was a familiar figure at the *Café Vachette*. A novel written by him in collaboration with Jean Moréas is still extant, in which the life of the *quartier* was described with an accuracy which showed long and close observation. But the time came when he too turned his back on the left bank of the Seine, and since then his career has been upwards. He is a man of immense productiveness; his articles in the *Journal* are never less than three columns in length, and his novels are each but single chapters in some colossal and cyclic work of fiction which he has planned.

It was indeed in a *café* of the Latin Quarter that I first met Pierre Louys, but this was only during a youthful *fugue*. We became friends at once, and spent on that first occasion thirty-six hours in each other's company. After that day we constantly met. He was then a mere lad; yet already at that time he was writing the book which won him such fame in Paris, *Aphrodite*, and I remember how he used to bring me pages of his

strange Gothic manuscript, and read me passages of the story. When he joined the army as a conscript and was in garrison at Abbeville, we used to correspond with great frequency, and he never came to Paris without paying me a visit in his *piou-piou's* uniform. After his release from the service we went together to Amsterdam, and spent long hours in the galleries there.

The publication of *Aphrodite* was one of the biggest successes that Parisian publishers have ever experienced. It appeared first in *feuilleton* form in the *Revue Blanche*, and as soon as the publishers of this magazine announced that it was to appear in volume form also, the office was inundated with orders from every part of France. More than fourteen thousand copies were called for before the book had been issued. The booksellers grumbled at authors who, having written a book that is going to sell in enormous quantities, do not arrange to be able to meet an enormous demand for it. Amongst the older men of letters in France the triumph of so mere a lad aroused even bitterer feelings. An Academician was heard to say at a *soirée*, "There is something sad in the success of so young a man." The book realized a fortune and now ranks as a classic.

His triumph affected Pierre Louys in not the slightest degree. The acclaim of the public whether to applaud or to blame will never affect the true artist. His "Vos Plaudite" to the audience who have witnessed his labours is never but an afterthought, as it was with the actors on the stage in Rome. But after the publication of *Aphrodite* I saw much less of him, for he spent many months of every year in travelling in the South. It was a point with him to dislike northern countries, and though he formerly used

to visit London, he confined his later journeys to regions south of Paris. He is a grandson of the Doctor Louis who attended the unfortunate Louis XVI., and his brother is Director of Foreign Affairs and one of the most important officials of the French Government. Pierre Louys is now married, and, like his brother-in-law, Henri de Régnier, is on the high road to the Academy. I am glad to be able to finish this story of broken lives with a record so full of brightness and endowed with prospects so hopeful.

## CHAPTER XXIII

Ernest Dowson—And the Moralists—The Catastrophe of his Life—His Pursuit of Pain—Why he came to me in Paris—How I First met him—The Poet and the Guardsman—His Delight in Self-Abasement—The Pathetic Promptings of Instinct—How I found him in London—He comes Home with me—The Distress of Two Poets—Ernest Dowson's Last Days—How Relief came to One Poet—The Coroner's Officer—"No Reasonable Cause"—His Obsequies.

**I**T has recently pleased certain writers, assuming the tones of saddened yet reproachful friendship, to publish about that delicate soul and elect, Ernest Dowson, writings which go to class him among the self-destroying seekers of coarse pleasures, whose pitiful mode of life, with its logical and ineluctable conclusion, I have depicted in the pages which immediately precede. It was the act of gazetteers, whose eager haste to print on topics of actuality allowed of no time to consider what things were better left unsaid. Their claim, moreover, to write as friends of the dead poet, was to arrogate to themselves titles to which they never held the fee, unless, indeed, in this degenerate day, the sacred name of friend appertains to him also who, when a man of genius has died abandoned and forlorn, and the rare mourners are returning from his humble obsequies, emerges from the penumbra of the lych-gate, notebook in hand, to gather such details about his agony and death as shall point a homily on the pitfalls of the artistic life.



I hold that no man can sincerely call himself the friend of one who is dead who does not, when writing of him, most diligently ask himself whether, if his friend could read the things which he puts in black or white, he would not take exception to any single line. In the essays on Ernest Dowson to which I have referred I find dragged into the light and laughter of the day the story of that poor courtship of his, on which, when it had faded into the regions of far-off, unhappy things, the poet's mouth was for ever closed. Would any friend of Ernest Dowson's, being as a friend acquainted with the exquisite sensitiveness of the man, have thrown open to the trampling feet of the mob this holy, private, and most particular spot?

I am well aware that the composition of the homily exacted some plausible explanation of the motives which led to that later conduct on which the moralist was to expatiate with such earnestness and effect, and that since Ernest Dowson had to be handed down to posterity branded as a drunkard, it must appear an act of pure friendship to show first what drove him to drunkenness. The truth was elsewhere; it was known to those who were really his friends; it was a catastrophe in his life which was infinitely more tragic and appalling than any cross in love, a catastrophe infinitely more cruel even than that which felled poor Maurice Rollinat into a living corpse, one of those accursed blows of Fate which in their ill-omened and unreasoning barbarity shake to its very foundations a man's faith in the goodness that directs the destinies of men. It was the ruin, complete and orbicular, of any chance of peace or happiness in this world. It was one of those crushing blows which, when they do

not kill their victim outright, leave the unhappy man so broken in spirit, so shattered in nerve, so entirely despairing and overwhelmed, that those poor convulsions which are his after-acts, however inco-ordinate and even grotesque they may be, should inspire every man of heart with no other feeling than one of that awed respect with which one contemplates the great tragedies of human existence.

To this tragedy Ernest Dowson never once alluded, and it was not till after his death that I learned why it was that during all the years that I had known him I had never once seen him happy. Men under the pain of great sorrows have at all times in the history of the world laid violent hands upon themselves: they beat their bosoms, they tear their hair, they cover their heads with ashes. The sorrow of Ernest Dowson lasted as long as his life, and that is why until his death he afforded to his friends the poignant spectacle of a man deliberately bent on self-destruction. In the very disorder of his dress one saw the sackcloth of Biblical days. His drunkenness, spasmodic as it was, was effect, not cause. I remember how impressed I was with the fact that the same spirit prompted him as drives other unhappy men to seek in the duress and physical sufferings of La Trappe some surcease from the intolerable pangs of memory or conscience, by many acts which came under my observation.

In 1899 he came to my apartment on the Boulevard Magenta, and asked to be allowed to stay with me. He told me that he was frightened of his room. He was then living in a room in the Hôtel d'Odessa, near the Gare Montparnasse, and he said that he dreaded returning there. This fear, which has been observed in others also, is one of the symptoms of the most acute neurasthenia.

De Maupassant was haunted towards the end by the same dread. I told Dowson that he was welcome ; but as I had no bedroom to give him, I offered to have a bed made for him on a large couch, which, fitted with springs and comfortably upholstered, would have made an excellent substitute for a bedstead with mattresses. At the same time there stood in my study another sofa, which was covered with American cloth, and which was the hardest and most uneasy couch that upholsterer ever devised. I had bought it on this very account, so that I should only seek repose upon it during my labours, when extremest fatigue compelled me. Dowson refused the soft couch and insisted on sleeping on the hard one. He would allow no bed to be made up for him, but just threw himself upon the sofa in his clothes. He would not even remove his boots. In this uncomfortable way he spent most of the nights during the six weeks that he remained with me. I could cite many other examples of the deliberate way in which he used to inflict pain and discomfort on his body, as though his soul wished to revenge itself upon its earthly coil for what it had suffered through its agency.

I first met Dowson in London, at some Bohemian chambers in the Temple. Even in those days his future might have caused anxiety to his friends, for already at that time his visits were not welcomed. The tenant of those chambers, endowed with that racial *flair* which scents dissolution and reveals to those who possess it which men amongst their acquaintances are not going to be prosperous in life, was already treating him with coldness. Still, in those days his career was full of promise. He had written one novel, *The Comedy of Masks*, in collaboration, which was a commercial as well as an artistic success ;

he was welcomed as a contributor to the reviews which prided themselves on being guardians of the English language and the purity of style; he was known as the author of many beautiful poems.

He was at that time living in the dock-house of a dock in Stepney, which is described in his first novel. It had come to him from his fathers. There was employment for him here and an assured existence amidst surroundings which might have appealed to his poetic nature. All the romance of the sea was brought to his very feet. The great ships which came into his dock for repair seemed like wounded sea-birds beating their wings upon his threshold. Animation, variety, colour embellished a scene over which the hundred different types of seafaring men from all parts of the world passed to and fro. But already in those days all things on this earth had lost their power of appealing to his heart or imagination. He hunted after suffering with the eagerness with which most men pursue pleasure.

I remember that one night when I had accompanied him down to Limehouse and he had settled me in his home, he rushed out again into the streets. When he returned some hours later, he was bleeding from a stab which he had received in the forehead. It was a nasty wound, and the striker's purpose obviously had been to stab him in the eye. He said nothing about the encounter, but he seemed highly pleased as he surveyed himself in the glass. I do not doubt now that, having purposely provoked some ruffian in the streets, he felt grateful to him for his ready response with a knife. His body had been disfigured; suffering had been awarded to him. On another occasion we were riding together in an omnibus in the Strand. He

had been talking quietly to me, when suddenly his phrases began to precipitate themselves, while he waved his hand in the air. He closed his remarks with, "And that is what I want to say," and, so saying, brought the palm of his hand violently down upon the thigh of a Guardsman who was sitting opposite to him. The slap was a painful one, and the soldier expostulated. Dowson immediately retorted by asking the man, who was a big, strong fellow, to step outside into the street and fight. I had great difficulty in pacifying him. He taunted the soldier with cowardice when the latter said that it was impossible for him, being in uniform, to engage in a fight in the street. "But," said the Guardsman, "if you like to come to Knightsbridge Barracks to-morrow, we'll put the gloves on and see who is the better man." When at last I had induced Dowson to leave the omnibus and was remonstrating with him for the folly of provoking a man who could have stunned him with one blow, he answered in French, "Well, and if it pleases me to be beaten?"

In those convulsions—his acts after the tragedy of his life—there were not wanting movements which showed that he was trying to save himself. Instinct is ever present under the will; and in his case, too, instinct now and again made itself manifest. There were pathetic efforts on his part to bring order into the chaos of his life. I have in my possession a letter which he wrote to one of his friends in which, sending him a sum of money to keep for him, he begged him to dole it out at the rate of so much a week. "You are to send me three pounds every Monday; but please never send me more than three pounds, whatever I may ask for."

At the time when he came to me in Paris his nerves were all gone. I have related how he feared to



enter his room. Before that dread came upon him, he had told me that there was a statue on his mantelpiece which filled him with terror. "I lie awake at night and watch it. I know that one night it means to come down off its shelf and strangle me." He was so nervous that he could not enter a shop to ask for anything. He was ever haunted with the perpetual dread of falling down paralyzed. His was the most complete case of neurasthenia that I have ever witnessed. He could not summon up the energy to open any letter that came for him.

Once he asked me to go to the Hôtel d'Odessa for him and see if one had come. He was expecting a letter from his publisher, which might or might not contain a cheque. I received a letter from the hotel-keeper and took it to Dowson, who was waiting a long way down the Rue de Rennes. He was very anxious to know if the money had come, but he was too nervous to open the packet and assure himself. He put it into the side-pocket of his jacket, and gradually, as we walked along, worked the envelope open. At last he cried out, "It's all right! I feel the frill of the cheque!" Some time later, having written to some friends in London for money to enable him to discharge his hotel bill and to return to London, he left the registered letter which came in reply unopened for four days. Part of the time it was lying on the floor of the room which I had assigned to him. "I am frightened to open it," he said.

He delighted in self-abasement. In this way he flung ashes on his head. I remember once asking him, having met him after a long absence, what work he was doing, for I knew that he had been engaged on a novel. "Hack-work!" he cried, with a laugh which had the exultation in it of the damned. He neglected his clothes

wilfully, and always presented a dreadful appearance. That it had been wilful I learned when he was dying. In those last days I could give him no greater pleasure than to bring home to our cottage a new shirt or a clean collar for him, and to put it on him.

He has been represented as delighting in the company of outcasts—glad to drink with any vagrom man whom he met with in his staggering revels. It is not the truth. He was full of pride and reserve. He fled from the society of strangers; and as to the populace, he had for common people a contempt and abhorrence for which I sometimes used to chide him. On one occasion during the last days of his life a lady came to see me at the cottage in London where he was living with me. Although at that time his dislike of strangers had assumed a morbid tinge, he remained quietly in the room during her visit. After she had left I said, "Well, Ernest, you see you can bear the company of strangers?" "Oh," he said, "I did not mind her. I could see that she was a lady."

It was some months after he had returned to England that I saw him again. I heard that he had been very ill, and that he was living in a garret in the Euston Road. I visited him there one Sunday morning as I was on my way to King's Cross Station, where I was to take the train for a country house in Hertfordshire. I found him living at the top of a house exactly opposite St. Pancras Church—one of those old-fashioned buildings which have since been pulled down, with the exception, I think, of the one which so grudgingly sheltered poor Dowson.

I found him in bed, though it was past noon, and he told me that he had been lying there since the preceding Friday. I said that I hoped that his wants had been

attended to, and he said that his landlady supplied him with nothing but a small breakfast. "And I don't think that she will let me have that very long," he said; "for I am in arrears with my rent, and they are pressing me for it. Every morning now there is a note from the landlord on my tray, asking me whether 'I consider myself a gent,' and threatening to turn me out." I went to get him some provisions and a bottle of wine, and I remember walking up and down the Euston Road waiting for the "Rising Sun" to open its doors, full of very mournful forebodings for my friend.

I returned from Hertfordshire the next afternoon and went to see him again. I found him just as I had left him; he had not stirred from his bed. He was just too wretched and depressed to make any effort on behalf of himself. I induced him to get up, and I took him out. He showed me a small confectioner's shop, where, he said, "I get my meals when I get any." It was a place where he could buy buns and glasses of milk. He told me that he was working for a publisher who paid him weekly when he sent in his work, but that for weeks he had been unable to do any writing.

I returned to see him several times, and each time found him lying in bed, often without having eaten anything for twenty-four hours. Then came a period of several days when I did not see him. I had my own spinning to mind, as they say in Yorkshire. One evening I went into the Bodega in Bedford Street to write some letters in the room downstairs. While I was writing, some one touched me on the shoulder. I turned round and started, for it was as if some one from the grave was standing at my side.

It was poor Ernest. He told me that though he was very ill, he had been driven by the threats of his

landlord, who was an Italian music-master, to leave his bed and go to the office of his publisher to appeal for help. The publisher had left on a holiday; there was no chance of his getting any money, and he was trying to brace up his courage to return to the Euston Road to face his landlord with empty hands. I asked him if half a sovereign would help him, and as I passed it to him I felt his hand. It was in an abominable state. "Dowson," I said, "you are very ill, and I am not going to let you return to that place. You must come with me." I told him that I was living just then in a cottage in Catford, of which the lower part was let out to a bricklayer and his wife; but that I could give him a pleasant room to sit in, and that I would look after him until his affairs might take a turn.

He said that he would be glad to come, for he had not the courage to wrangle for further grace at his lodgings. "But," he said, "you must take me down first-class to Catford, for I cannot bear to be with people." I remember that he was so weak that I had to take him in a cab to Charing Cross, and again in a cab from Catford Station to my home. He lived with me there just six weeks, the last days of his short life. My first desire after getting him home was to send for a doctor; but he would not allow me to do so. He said that he was suffering only from the after-effects of influenza, and that as soon as his strength returned he would be quite well. He warned me that if I brought anybody to see him, he would at once leave the house. This was because he suspected, as indeed had been my intention, that I might bring a doctor in to see him without letting him know the visitor's quality. Whenever he heard a knock at the door downstairs, he used to jump up from his chair, hurry off into his bedroom, and

lock himself in. He never left the house after he had once entered it. I could not induce him to come for the shortest walk. He used to spend his days sitting in the arm-chair in my front room, which was a pleasant and sunny place, with a view over green fields in front of the two windows.

We were not prosperous ; indeed, at that time I had been glad to take the task of writing a pamphlet on some new process of making white lead, and this pamphlet had to be produced in the intervals of attending to his wants. He often used to send me out to get medicines made up for him from prescriptions which he found in *Health in the Home* and similar publications. But the seal had been set upon his destiny. There were no remedies which could have saved his life. He was dying, though we did not know it, of galloping consumption. There was nothing to show how near the end was. He made good meals ; he was cheerful ; we used to laugh together, as I read him passages from my work, on the pass to which the Parnassians had come. A pathetic circumstance was that he believed that the disposal of the remainder of his interest in the property at Limehouse would place a sum of £600 or £700 at his disposal ; and he used to talk with pleasurable anticipation of what he would do when he had received this money. His plan was to find some agreeable companion who would share expenses and go with him to the South of France. The fact was that there was nothing to come to him from the property ; but the illusion was a pleasant one, and he did not live to face the disappointment of learning the truth.

After he had been four weeks with me, urgent business called me to France. I had some work to do which, in the state of my affairs, it was impossible for me to neglect.



I had taken leave of him, having arranged for care to be taken of him in my absence, and had proceeded to Catford Station, there to take the train to London, on my way to France. As I was walking up and down the platform, thinking of Dowson, a prompting came to me to return to him. I tried to resist the feeling, for it was urgent that I should not postpone any longer the work which I had undertaken to do. But the feeling grew stronger and stronger. At last I threw my ticket away and returned home. He was pleased to see me. He said he had been almost expecting me to come back, and I promised him then that I would stay with him until, as he had for some time past been arranging to do, he had gone to live with another friend who had rooms in Bromley. But the friend in Bromley was unable to receive him as soon as he had expected, and so it happened that Ernest Dowson was with me to the end. We used to sit together all day talking of literature and of Paris days. At times he put out his hand and touched mine, and said that he was happy that he had met me. I think that those last days of peace and quiet were as happy as any that had been allowed him in life. He read all the books that I had in the house, but *Esmond* was his favourite volume. He used to take it to bed with him, and it was by his side when he breathed his last.

On the day before his death, towards evening, his condition began to cause me serious alarm. He had wished to dictate a letter to me which was intended for his friend, the co-author of his novels. But he could not form the opening phrase. "I feel too tired," he said. Still, that night I could not induce him to go to bed. He sat up till five in the morning, and even after he had retired to his room he kept shouting out to me not to go

to sleep, but to talk with him. I remember that we discussed *Oliver Twist*, and to a remark I made that I did not think that for anything that Fagin could have told him Bill Sikes would have murdered Nancy, he answered, "No, he would have gone for Fagin." He would not let me go to sleep. He wished to be convivial. At six in the morning he asked me to drink some Gilbey's port which was in his room. At eight in the morning he was coughing badly, and he sent me to the chemist's to get him some ipecacuanha wine, which he said relieved him. But after this, as he still continued to cough badly, I declared that a doctor must be fetched. The doctor arrived an hour after the poor fellow had died. I had gone downstairs to fetch something, and as I was coming up again I called out, "You had better get up, Ernest, and sit in the armchair. You will breathe more easily." As I entered the room, a woman who was in attendance in the house pointed to the bed. I looked, and saw that his forehead was bathed in perspiration. I went and raised him up, and while I was wiping his brow his head fell back on my shoulder. He was dead. I remember that the woman then asked me for two coppers to put on his eyes, and—which shows how poor we were—it was she who had to advance the coins.

A telegram to an address which he had once given me brought down to Catford one of his relatives, a kind old gentleman who told me that but for Ernest's pride and sensitiveness he could have had from his relations anything that he needed ; but that none of them had had any conception of the condition to which he had fallen. This gentleman relieved me of great perplexity. I had wondered how the body was to be buried without recourse to the parish authorities. He provided for everything.

A policeman came from the coroner's office to inquire into the circumstances of this death; the terrace was agog with rumours. I was examined at length; my motives in housing the dead poet did not seem clear to the officer. Here, again, the old gentleman was of service to me. He was able to assure the policeman that the deceased had had no property, that nothing had been made away with. In the end, the coroner's officer shut up the pocket-book in which he had been taking copious notes, and remarked, "Well, I think that I can report to the coroner that there is no reasonable cause for suspicion in this case." Before he left, Dowson's relative replaced with two large silver coins the pence which the woman had placed on the eyes of the corpse. He told her that these coins were to be hers after they had served their purpose. What ensued would not, I am sure, have occurred in any other country. No sooner had we left the house than the woman removed the coins from where they lay, and went off to drink herself drunk on beer in the nearest four-ale bar.

I had communicated the news of his death to the papers, and soon my little cottage was flooded with messages of sympathy. I had to hear over and over again that "If I had only known" from friends whose consciences were touched, that pitiful subterfuge of egotism which sets the shoulders of a man who knows the world shrugging in spite of himself. Costly wreaths were sent in abundance to the man whose death had undoubtedly been hastened on by the weeks of starvation which he had undergone in his garret in the Euston Road, and his hearse was followed to the Roman Catholic<sup>1</sup> cemetery in Lewisham by a numerous con-

<sup>1</sup> He had joined the Catholic Church while a student at Oxford. He used to say that it was the only logical religion. But I fancy the

course. To-day his work has so far advanced in the public esteem that his poems have recently been republished, and his autographs find ready purchasers at high prices. They are pitiful letters for the most part.

poetry and the legend of the history of that Church more strongly appealed to his imagination than any dogma to his reason. In a side chapel in the Church at Arques, where he spent some months of his life, there is the picture of a martyred virgin from whose chin a long beard grows. It is related of him that he used to spend hours on his knees in adoration before the altar over which this painting hangs.

## CHAPTER XXIV

Oscar Wilde—His Kindness to Ernest Dowson—My Friendship with him—The Story of my Book—Subjective or Objective?—What crawled between us—*De Profundis*—The Implacability of Wilde's Enemies—The Obvious Sincerity of his Prison Book—Outward Evidence of this Sincerity—His Kindness to his Fellow-Prisoners—A Pupil in French.

ONE of the kind acts which were done by Oscar Wilde, after his release from prison, while he was living in Berneval under the name of Sebastian Melmoth, was to offer to Ernest Dowson a temporary refuge in his villa there. Dowson had been staying at the village inn of Arques; he was deep in the landlord's debt; his publisher was unwilling to make further advances. It was at a time when he was in great difficulty that Oscar Wilde came over to Arques and invited him to come to Berneval, where he kept him until his affairs improved. It was a kind act, because already at that time Oscar Wilde himself was in financial straits once more. Of the considerable sum which had been given by a lady to be handed to him on his release from gaol only a small balance had come into his hands; his mode of life at Berneval had been large and generous,<sup>1</sup> and at the time of which I am speaking he was so little in a position to entertain friends that those who visited him there

<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, Mr. Sebastian Melmoth gave a dinner to the forty children of the Berneval village school. Some days later he entertained at the Café des Tribunaux in Dieppe a famishing deputation of Parisian poets at a Lucullian banquet.



used to take their meals at their own charges at the neighbouring hotel.

It is not my purpose here to relate once more the story of my long friendship with that great and unhappy man. There is no need for me to renew that unspeakable grief. All that was to be written I wrote, and from what many people in many parts of the world have told me my words seem to them as though they were engraved in letters of steel upon a granite tablet. One merit, at least, that book possessed, and this was that when I wrote it, it was with the entire self-detachment of a man who, upon his deathbed, whispers so that he may unburthen a heavy heart of some tale of sorrow. I neither sought nor expected from those writings profit or repute. In the early spring of 1902, living at that time in a garret in St. Malo, I had fallen into a great state of weakness. One day my landlady brought a doctor to see me, and after he had gone she came back and told me that he had said that it would surprise him if I were to live another fortnight. This prospect, long familiar to me from my own forebodings, disturbed me only in so far that I felt great regret to have delayed so long in writing a book which might win for a dead friend, who had been cruelly misjudged, that mercy which the justice of men should never banish from its councils, because, when it is lacking, their justice, deprived of its most essential element, shows the fierce and horrid aspect of oppression. That I appealed for justice, through mercy, aroused the anger of other friends of his, whose desire would seem to be to see him take his place in history as a victim of public intolerance, as a forefighter in the cause of larger liberties, an Alcibiades, ostracized yet justifiable, the martyred highpriest of a creed abhorrent to prejudice and

ignorance alone, a man execrated yet triumphant. In their eyes to ask for pity was to paint him as a king who would have abdicated; it was a confession of the weakness of his cause; it was treachery to his memory, an unwarranted repudiation of those principles which in their eyes invested him with his particular eminence. I did not see him in any of these parts, I do not so see him now, and, for the rest, did ever a man live in this world for whose life in its bearings towards his fellow-men apology was never needed?

It had seemed to me also that in justice to my kinsmen, to my private friends, and to that large constituency of helpless and downtrodden folk whose cause I had essayed to champion—for their sakes, indeed, not mine—I was in duty bound to write this book and to explain a friendship which I had never claimed in louder tones than when reproach and obloquy were the only answers which the public voice gave back.

The doctor had not read my case aright, but his opinion warned me that if my book were to be written at all, I must no longer delay. That same hour I again took my unfamiliar pen in hand, and I remember how at that moment I echoed Zola's cry at the crushing weight of a tiny quill. I could only write for the briefest periods; some days saw not even one black furrow traced upon the white plain of my paper. I was all alone; there was nobody to whom I could cry, as Alphonse Daudet did in a similar case, "Finis mon bouquin." I often felt so exhausted that, staggering from my table, I used to throw myself down on my bed, never thinking to rise from it again.

It was in this way and under these circumstances that a book was written to which some critics have pointed as the work of egotism. That I treated the

tragedy of my friend's life and destiny subjectively was made a reproach, as though indeed it would have been possible, in view of the attitude of the public, to present my friend's sufferings in any other way. Not for Zöilus, indeed, but for my friends, will I here declare that the very reason why I had tarried so long before beginning my work was that whilst an objective treatment of the tragedy seemed to me one which would never gain a hearing, I was loth to give to my own personality the prominence which the other mode would involve. I had the teaching of Carlyle in mind ; I had not forgotten what Oscar Wilde himself had written on the question which presents itself to every literary artist when face to face with his subject. The doctor's ultimatum solved the dilemma. I could indicate to my readers through the emotions which I had experienced the tremendous incidence of my friend's tragedy on those who had known and loved him, and, being myself no more, would surely be absolved of egotism.

Of what I there wrote, I need only here repeat, that I first met Oscar Wilde in Paris in 1883, at the house of a Greek lady, and at a dinner-party at which I was also first introduced to Paul Bourget and John Sargent ; that we became friends at once, and spent many weeks in Paris in each other's company ; that after this first period we frequently met in London and Paris ; that I lived for some time in the same house with him in Charles Street, Grosvenor Square, and that it was there that he announced his engagement to me ; that after his accession to wealth and popularity I saw but little of him, and that indeed a few weeks before his catastrophe, dining at his house, he appeared to me so altered that I feared that our friendship was drawing to its close ; that when the scandal broke out

I refused to believe in his guilt of the charges brought against him, basing this faith on the fact that during all the years I had known him there had not been a single word of his that I had heard nor a single act of his that I had witnessed to warrant any such suspicion ; that I was with him for some time preceding his last trial, and profoundly admired the grandeur of soul which he displayed under the terrible circumstances of his position ; that after his trial I repeatedly visited him in prison, and was able to reconcile his wife to him ; that after his release we met again in France and resumed our friendship, but that he, having returned to other friends, his manner towards me became distant ; that it was then that the friendship became an unhappy one ; that I was away from Paris during his last illness and unable to follow his hearse to the grave.

After his return from Naples to settle down in Paris, I saw little of him. In the first place, as a consequence of repeated hammer-blows of destiny, I had been beaten down into a condition not much removed from that of Dowson in his last days. Evil days had come upon me ; I had not the strength to fight against adversities which for the most part directly resulted from the share I had taken in the misfortunes of my friend. He never came to see me ; he avoided my company. I did not blame him. The poor man was sorely embarrassed. The blind cannot lead the blind, and those who fall wounded in the battle of life must even draw out their agonies alone. At the same time in those years, 1898 and 1899, he used to frequent people whom it was impossible for me to meet, men classed in Paris as social outcasts, who in reprisal for my having turned my back upon them after a public exposure of their infamy, lost no opportunity of poisoning against me the mind of the man of whose

friendship I had been so proud. If I had any reproach to make against Oscar Wilde, it would be that he listened to their perfidious falsehoods ; but I know that before he died he had long since come to learn the real character of these men, and was sorry to have allowed them to crawl between us.

Of his prison life we never spoke together, and though I believe that at times he did refer to it, I was never present on such an occasion. And by reason of the circumstance which I describe above, I was little in his company in the year immediately preceding his death. But from other sources I have gained a full knowledge of the sad history of his life after the catastrophe.

The question has been much agitating the public mind of late all over the world whether, when he wrote *De Profundis*, Oscar Wilde was sincere in his repentance and in his purpose to draw good in the future out of his atrocious humiliations and sufferings. Here once more his remorseless enemies saw their opportunity to wreak a final vengeance on his memory. "Even you," wrote to me some time ago an English *grande dame*, "seem hardly to know how the run of English society hated him"—she was writing of the period before his disgrace. "I was never allowed to ask him to our house. How unconscious he must have been of this hatred when he thought that society would stand up for him!"

He had wilfully offended so many people that one does not wonder—human nature being what it is—that he aroused hatreds which are implacable even before the spectacle of his abandoned grave. I noted down some time ago, as I re-read his books and plays, many passages in which he seemed deliberately to lay himself out to vex in their self-esteem entire professions,



whole classes of society. Now a wound to his self-esteem is the one thing a man never forgives, never can forgive. The reason of this, I believe, is that our self-esteem is merely our confidence in our own power of resistance, in our chances of survival in the struggle for life, and that to shake this self-esteem or confidence in a man is to inspire him with doubts of these chances, to fill him with the most distressing forebodings, and thus to earn his mortal enmity. The tyrants who in former days put to death by cruel tortures the bringers of bad tidings manifested this enmity, so inspired, with the licence habitual to them, and by the barbarity of their vengeance demonstrated its degree. Among more civilized people and in urbaner times the enmity is as intense, even if the mode of reprisal be less violent and immediate.

I cannot understand these doubts as to Oscar Wilde's sincerity, if, indeed, these doubts themselves be sincere. Even in taking the view least flattering to his memory, one might point out that such revulsions of purpose and inclination have been commonly observed in the most licentious of men. For no other object than to foster this revulsion was La Trappe founded. We read of Henri III. of France, who, by his affectations, his sybaritic tastes, his effeminate love of personal adornments, fine clothes, perfumes, jewels, his reckless quest of indulgence and pleasure, may well figure as a prototype of the Oscar Wilde of the popular legend, that at times a moral reaction, which lasted for a longer or a shorter period, was observed in him also. "Quelquefois il se dépouillait de ses riches atours, et s'arrachait à sa vie voluptueuse. On le voyait alors couvert d'un sac de pénitent, un gros chapelet à la main, parcourir les rues en procession, faire des retraites chez les capucins, et ne

prendre que le nom de frère Henri. 'Il se fit bâtir un grand et beau logis au marché aux chevaux, avec certaines petites cellules, pour aller là passer quelques semaines en simagrées de dévotion.'" It is but a manifestation of that instinctive return under the thrall of discipline which Wordsworth explains in his sonnets. It is that reaction from excess of liberty, from excess of power which sent Charles-Quint knocking at the doors of Saint-Just. Indeed, this last example is the apter one, for the story of Charles-Quint after his abdication illustrates that, however sincere a man may be in his renunciation of his own prepotence, his old nature may triumph over his newly formed resolutions, and circumstance may undo them.

I am often written to by people who ask me to help them to form an opinion on the sincerity or insincerity of Oscar Wilde while he was writing *De Profundis*. In advising them to believe him sincere I present no arguments drawn from psychology. I inform them of a fact which must appeal to an average mind. This fact is that, at the time when he was writing this book, opportunities offered themselves to him in prison to obtain tobacco and spirits, and that the man who had formerly been a slave to one at least of these indulgences refused to take advantage of these offers, although he might have done so without any risk resulting from so grave a breach of prison regulations. Everybody knows that to the smoker the privation of tobacco is one of the worst sufferings of prison life, and that men in prison will do anything, will incur any danger, for one chance to indulge themselves. I believe that Oscar Wilde's refusal proceeded simply from his determination that from the new life all self-indulgence should be excluded, and I hold that in itself alone it is a good proof of his sincerity.

Some people write and tell me that they have heard that while he was writing *De Profundis* he was at the same time writing "letters of a very different sort." Here the same calumny is at work which has set afoot an atrocious story to which in a recent letter a lady drew my attention. "A dreadful story goes round still," she writes, "that the night he heard of his wife's death he borrowed evening clothes to go to a party, to show how little he cared." Did I need to qualify as "atrocious," or my correspondent as "dreadful," a story so obviously untrue?

As to these letters which he wrote in prison, I suppose that reference is made to one or two little notes that he was able to pass to fellow-prisoners, who, on their release from gaol, made haste to dispose of these autographs. I have seen some of these letters, and I am wondering how his bitterest enemy could see in them any proof that while he was writing *De Profundis* his child-like simplicity had changed into hypocrisy. Here is a specimen of one of these notes, written in answer to an inquiry from a fellow-prisoner as to how he had passed his Sunday. It is written on the inside of a prison envelope, with "On Her Majesty's Service" printed across the top of the paper.<sup>1</sup> "Have had a very good Sunday, reading Goethe's *Faust*, a very great work of art. The silly chaplain, bleating from the reading-desk and bawling from the pulpit, makes me sick with rage; but I enjoyed

<sup>1</sup> As to the writing of this note, the Baroness Isabelle Ungern-Sternberg, of Reval, in Russia, Vice-President of the Graphological Society of Paris, and one of the most remarkable adepts in the graphological science in the world, to whom I submitted it, together with other pieces from his pen, stated: "If it is a fact that this note was written shortly before his release from prison, I admire the serenity of soul, the absence of all bitterness which are shown in the writing. It is more chastened, almost more beautiful, than the writing of his youth."

the lovely sunlight." It is possible that these remarks about the chaplain inspired doubts in some minds, but I am not aware that in *De Profundis* Oscar Wilde undertook to make respect for individual clergymen one feature of his reformation. It is true also that he showed an interest in certain prisoners. His kindness for his fellow-sufferers went so far that, to prevent some lads, who were mere children, from stopping in gaol, he arranged for the payment of the fines to which they had been sentenced for poaching.

After he had left prison, and was living in Berneval, although at that time every pound was of consequence to him, he sent to a few fellow-prisoners who had awakened his compassion, certain sums of money on their release. One of the youths to whom he thus showed kindness was a lad who acted as "cleaner" to the corridor in which his cell in Reading Gaol was situated. It is to be noted that, though he might have taken advantage of this lad's services to empty his slops and to fetch water for him, so thoroughly had he accepted all the humiliations of his position that he insisted on performing these menial offices himself. He was greatly interested in the little fellow. He attempted to teach him French, and the youth was most assiduous in his efforts to learn. "He had obtained an old French grammar from the chaplain," my informant tells me, "and, armed with a slate and a pencil, he would sit in his cell every evening worrying his brain over the mysteries of French conjugations. In the morning, when he went the round of the cells, one could hear him greeting Mr. Wilde with a 'Bonjour, monseer!' pronounced with the vilest English accent. When Mr. Wilde left the prison he did not forget the poor little cleaner, but sent him £2, as I have been told."

His life after he left prison has been pointed to as a proof of his insincerity. It would with greater aptness and much more justice serve to illustrate the cruelty of society towards the man who has fallen, a cruelty which extends to the degree of preventing him from carrying into effect such good resolutions as he may have formed. If you strip a man of his self-respect, it does not seem fair, or even logical, to complain that his acts are not those of a self-respecting man. For the rest, I have never heard and do not know that anything that Oscar Wilde did after his release from prison justifies any one in branding him with the most terrible word which mediæval judges could write up over the stake at which they burned their victims. "RELAPS." I have heard, and I know, that people did all they could—and none with more ferocity than his own countrymen—to drive him to that despair which prompts men to do the very acts for which they are being held up to execration; but there is no proof whatever in Oscar Wilde's case that his despair carried him to this extreme. He was hunted from place to place; he was never for one instant allowed to forget the past; people took delight in reminding him of his disgrace. It was the same in Naples as it was in Paris, in Paris as in Dieppe; there was not a spot on earth where he could feel himself free from insult. He was ordered out of hotels and restaurants and *cafés* because some passing Englishman—some petty tyrant—desirous of exercising power, might warn the landlord of the danger of allowing such a customer to be seen on his premises.

One day in a hairdresser's shop on the boulevards, Wilde, who had been shaved, vacated his seat. "The next of these gentlemen, please," cried the hairdresser, speaking to a group of customers who were waiting their



turn. The man whose right it was to be attended to next was an Englishman. He had recognised Oscar Wilde, and he called out so that everybody in the big room could hear him, “If you wish to shave me you must give me another chair, for I won’t sit in the same place as that fellow who has just got up. That is Oscar Wilde!” “I staggered as though I had been shot,” said Oscar in speaking of this outrage, “and I went reeling out into the street like a drunken man.” And that is but one instance of the affronts which were constantly put upon him. I do not think that under these circumstances the moralist could justly blame him for any excess to which despair and revolt might have driven him; but, as I say, there is no proof whatever that after his release from prison he relapsed.

## CHAPTER XXV

Oscar Wilde in Prison—Two Years' Hard Labour—Wandsworth Gaol—His Removal to Reading—His Illness—His Subsequent Treatment—How *De Profundis* was Written—In the Exercise Yard—His Sympathy with his Fellow-Sufferers—His Fears for the Future—His Departure from Reading—Conversations in Prison—"Read Carlyle."

I HAVE explained that my *Story of an Unhappy Friendship* was purely subjective, and I have given the reasons why I selected that mode of treatment. It did not, therefore, coincide with the scheme of the book to give any particulars about the prison life of Oscar Wilde, although I was singularly well informed on the subject. To-day circumstances are different. Through the publication of *De Profundis*, that narrative becomes one to which the history of literature has a claim, and I see no further reason for withholding it. I will give it in the very words of the various informants from whom I collected it:

"Two years' imprisonment with hard labour! To the uninitiated this may not seem a very heavy sentence, but any one who has ever been in an English prison knows that sentence of five years' penal servitude would be less severe, for the simple reason that the longer sentence would be served in a convict establishment. Added to this, there would be three months remitted off every year, which would make the actual time served about three years and nine months. Convicts, also, are

much better fed and are more in the open air than prisoners in local or county prisons. The latter do their work, or the greater portion of it, under cover. They are employed in their cells picking oakum, making mats or mail-bags, or else grinding corn in the mill-shed. Some, of course, are employed at stone-breaking; but this class of work is gradually falling into desuetude. Mr. Wilde, therefore, had no reason to endorse the opinion of the press, *i.e.* that he had received a lenient sentence. The first prison he went to after his conviction was Wandsworth, and though his experiences in this establishment are unknown to me, yet I have good reason to believe that they were anything but agreeable. It appears that he complained so often to the visiting justices that the authorities were glad to get rid of him, and soon packed him off to Reading.

“There are three wings or blocks in Reading Gaol, called A, B, and C respectively. It was in ‘C’ block, in the third cell on the third landing, that Oscar Wilde was incarcerated; and as each prisoner takes his number from that of the cell, thus it was that he was known in prison as ‘C. 3. 3.’ On the wall outside each cell door hangs a card giving the name, date of conviction, and date of release of the occupant. On the card of C. 3. 3., however, the initials of his name only were given, O. W. O’F. W. This was done for the purpose of making identification impossible. It was a useless precaution, however, for his appearance alone sufficed to distinguish him among two thousand gaol-birds.

“When he first came to Reading he was put to oakum-picking, which he could not get on with; then to book-binding, and he was becoming quite an expert in the art when he became ill and was sent to the sick-ward. He remained in hospital for several weeks,

and when he came out he was put on light labour and medical diet. This diet consisted of a pint of cocoa for breakfast, with six ounces of white bread and one ounce of butter. The white bread was, to him, an agreeable change from the ordinary brown bread, which is rather nauseous to the palate. His dinner varied with the day. Some days he had a little meat, some four ounces, generally two potatoes, and a little bit of suet pudding; other days he would have soup or a pint of beef-tea, as the doctor might order. Indeed, he was seldom heard to complain in regard to his food. He got sufficient to stave off the pangs of hunger, for almost invariably there was something left in his tin.

“He was now absolved from all manual labour, and occupied much of his time in writing. It was understood that he was engaged in translating German into English. I fancy this must have been more congenial to his taste than picking oakum. He, of course, had to keep his cell clean and tidy. He washed it out carefully every morning, and should the warder inadvertently have omitted to have him supplied with water for that purpose, “C. 3. 3.” quickly drew his attention to the fact. He was asked one morning if he felt any humiliation in doing such work, and he was heard to answer, ‘Not the slightest. I consider no one too good to do his own work.’

“In his cell were a large number of books which had been sent him by his friends. These afterwards became the property of the prison authorities. It was a graceful concession on the part of the Prison Commissioners to allow this, and it was much appreciated by the poor prisoner. ‘What would I be without my books?’ he was heard to say. ‘Why, I should go

mad!' And there is no doubt that he spoke the truth and that he would have gone mad."

One who sometimes had the opportunity of looking into his cell illustrates the preceding passage, and said, speaking to me with tears in his eyes, "Is it any wonder that he paced his lonely cell night after night, talking to himself, continually talking to himself, and laughing to his imaginary visitors—such a heart-rending laugh. I think that I can see him now as he walks backwards and forwards through his cell, his handsome face sometimes lit up by an inward light and shining as brightly as an angel's. Then suddenly he would stop dead and speak, as though some one had entered." His light burned all night (this was another privilege which had been granted to him), and it was usually eleven or twelve o'clock before he retired to rest. The other prisoners retired at eight.

It was told me that after these troubled nights, "in the morning he would appear serene and smiling, as though he had slept on feathered down."

"Both the chaplain and the doctor visited Mr. Wilde occasionally in his cell, but he never seemed to derive much pleasure from their visits. 'They bore me,' he once said, 'and their conversation is uninteresting.'"

The companion to whom he made this remark said, "Well, surely, if you find the conversation of these highly educated men uninteresting, what must you find mine?" He answered, "I like to talk with people who have some originality, whether they be educated or not; I detest the commonplace, the practical, and the stereotyped."

"After Divine service he went out into the yard to exercise along with the other prisoners. He got plenty of exercise, for he invariably had two hours in the



morning and two in the afternoon. This exercise took the form of walking round a stone-paved circle. There were two circles, an inner and an outer one. The inner circle was used by prisoners who were lame, sick, or otherwise enfeebled, and the outer one by the strong and healthy. Mr. Wilde always walked on the outer ring; he took long and rapid strides, which soon brought him on the heels of the man in front of him. This used to cause the intervention of a warder, as an interval of three paces has to be kept between each prisoner, to prevent them from talking. It was certainly a most painful sight to see this distinguished man of letters in such company and living under such conditions.

“Yet, withal, he smiled. He smiled often. He smiled at any warder who had won his regard by speaking to him in a humane tone. He smiled at the little birds which used to come hopping around when the prisoners were at exercise. He smiled at his fellow prisoners, for he sympathized with them deeply. When any of the prisoners were undergoing punishment for breaches of the prison rules, it used to vex Mr. Wilde very much. Indeed, he had to endure the pain of others' sufferings as well as his own. On the morning after the birching of a prisoner named Prince, a soldier, he was seen to be greatly agitated. In defiance of prison rules he accosted a warder, coming out to him with outstretched arms, and cried out, ‘Oh! what a dreadful thing has happened!’ The warder asked him what he referred to, and he said, ‘That poor man Prince. They flogged him most unmercifully yesterday afternoon. His cries are ringing in my ears now. Oh! it was dreadful, dreadful!’

The prison lunatic and the prison child were the

especial objects of his commiseration. He was heard more than once to exclaim, 'What brutes those magistrates must be to send such children to prison!'

The spirit was moving him to which the world owes *De Profundis*. Will those who deny the sincerity of that book deny also the pity that he showed? The awakening of this spirit in him is described in his own words, in an article by André Gide, which appeared in the French Magazine *L'Ermitage*, in June, 1902, and were taken down by the French writer after a visit which he paid to Oscar Wilde at Berneval, directly after his release from prison.

“‘The Russian writers are extraordinary,’ said Wilde. ‘What makes their books so great is the pity which they have put into them. Formerly, don’t you know, I was very fond of *Madame Bovary*; but Flaubert would have no pity in his book, and that is why it seems small and narrow; pity is the side of a work which is open, by which it appears unbounded. Do you know, it was pity which prevented me from killing myself? Oh, during the first six months I was terribly unhappy—so unhappy that I wished to kill myself; but what kept me back from doing so was looking at *the others*, seeing that they were as unhappy as I was, and feeling pity for them. Oh dear! pity is an admirable thing; and I did not know what pity was!’ (Gide remarks, ‘He was speaking in a low tone of voice and without any excitement.’) ‘Have you ever grasped what an admirable thing pity is? As for me, I thank God every night—yes, on my knees, I thank God every night—for having taught me to know it. For I went into prison with a heart of stone, thinking of my pleasure only; but now my heart is altogether broken; pity has entered into it; I have

now come to understand that pity is the greatest and most beautiful thing in this world. . . .’”

Some of my correspondents have expressed the doubt that *De Profundis* was written in prison at all. I presume this doubt arises from the supposition that Oscar Wilde would have had no time nor opportunity to write. To an ordinary prisoner, indeed, such an opportunity would have been wanting. But after his illness, as we know, he was allowed to occupy himself in his cell with study and writing. A warder told me that Mr. Wilde was always writing towards the end of his time.

“Whilst in prison he wrote and wrote, and what he wrote about I never knew, for I always neglected to ask him. I know that he always had a big book in his cell—for all the world like a grocer’s ledger—and in it he kept writing and writing. The Chief Warder took it to the Governor’s office every morning, and after the Governor had glanced over it, the prisoner’s book was taken back to his cell again.”

It must have been in this book that *De Profundis* was originally written. The gods have no other ironies than these, and never another book might serve the artist for the composition of his supremest work of art than a grocer’s ledger.

Towards the end of his time his financial position was a source of great anxiety to him. A friend to whom he had confided his trouble said to him, ‘Well, I have got £5 put by. You can have them when you go out if you will give me an address where to send it to.’ Oscar Wilde refused the proffered loan, for the man was only a poor workman. The man then said, ‘You’ll miss my £5 if you don’t take them, when you wake up one morning and find

yourself without a breakfast.' 'I hope that it will never come to that,' said Wilde; 'but if it does, I promise to write to you for your £5, and I will buy a sandwich with it.' 'And a cigar,' said the man, with a laugh. 'The amount,' said Wilde, 'would scarcely run to that; but should there be anything over, I'll buy a postage stamp and write an acknowledgment.'"

He despaired of finding any publisher to print anything that he might write. He said to one man who had advised him to write for a living: "My friend, you do not know the world as well as I do. Some people might read what I chose to write out of morbid-mindedness, but I don't want that. I wish to be read for art's sake and not for my notoriety."

"During the last few days of his confinement he was subject to periodical fits of melancholy. He was not seen to smile. He expressed great anxiety as to what was being said of him in the newspapers.

"On the last evening of his stay in Reading Gaol he was buoyant and happy. He knew that he was to leave prison that night. He was fetched by the Governor and the Chief Warder. As he left his cell, Mr. Wilde turned and took a last look, then bent his head and followed down the steps. It was a beautiful evening, but in the prison it was getting dark and gloomy. There were tears shed in Reading Gaol that night when it was known that C. 3. 3. had gone.

"He was taken that evening in a closed carriage to a little wayside station a few miles out of Reading, and from there by train to Paddington. He was then conveyed to Wandsworth Gaol, whence he was released on the following morning. He travelled from Reading

to Paddington in company with the Chief Warder, but they were both in plain clothes and were not recognised. Outside Reading Prison the following morning a crowd collected to satisfy their morbid curiosity, but they were destined to be disappointed. At that moment, no doubt, he was crossing Wandsworth Common in the company of his friends."

In prisons, in despite of all regulations, there are many opportunities for conversation. I have learned many of the things that Oscar Wilde said to his companions.

André Gide repeats in the article referred to above a story that Oscar Wilde told him of how he came to speak first with a prisoner in Reading Gaol and of what resulted from it.

"Those who are in prison for the first time," he said, "recognise one another by the fact that they are unable to converse without moving their lips. . . . I had been locked up for six weeks, and during that time I had not spoken a word to a single soul—to a single soul. One evening we were marching one behind the other during the exercise hour, and suddenly behind me I heard my name spoken; it was the prisoner who was behind me who was saying, 'Oscar Wilde, I pity you, for you must suffer more than we do.' I had to make an enormous effort not to be observed (I thought that I was going to faint), and I said without turning round, 'No, my friend, we all suffer alike.' And that day I had no longer the faintest desire to kill myself.

"We spoke thus together for several days running. I got to know his name and what his trade was. His name was P—; he was an excellent fellow! But I had not yet learned how to talk without moving



my lips, and one evening, 'C. 3. 3.' (it was I who was C. 3. 3.) 'and A. 4. 8., leave the ranks.' We left the ranks, and the warder said, 'You will have to go before the Governor.' And as pity had already entered into my heart, I was alarmed only for my companion, absolutely on his account alone. For myself, I was pleased to think that I should suffer on his account. But the Governor was altogether terrible. He made P—— come in first; he wished to question us apart—for I must tell you that the punishment is not the same for the man who has spoken first and thus began the conversation, as for him who has answered. The punishment is double for the man who speaks first; usually the former gets fourteen days' cells, and the latter only seven. So the Governor wished to know which of us had spoken to the other first. And, naturally, P——, who was a very good fellow, said that it was he. And when, afterwards, the Governor had me brought in and questioned me, naturally I said that it was I who had spoken first. Then the Governor turned very red because he could not follow us in his understanding. 'But P—— says also that it was he who began to talk. I cannot make it out—I cannot make it out.' Can you imagine that he could not understand? He was much perplexed; he said, 'But I have already given him a fortnight . . .' Then he added, 'Well, if that's the way you have settled it, I shall give both of you a fortnight.' Was it not extraordinary? The man had no imagination of any kind."

Gide remarks here, "Wilde was greatly amused with what he was saying: he laughed; he was happy to be telling me this story."

"And naturally," continued Oscar Wilde, "after the fortnight, we had a greater wish than ever to talk to

each other. You cannot think how sweet it was to feel that we were suffering one for the other. As time went on, as we did not always have the same places in the ranks—as time went on I was able to converse with every one of the other prisoners ; to every one, to every one of them ! I got to know each man's name, each man's story, and the date on which they were to be released. And to each one of them I used to say, " As soon as you get out of prison, the first thing you must do is to go to the post office ; there will be a letter there for you with money in it."

A man had confessed to him that his religious belief was wavering, and Wilde said to him, " People fashion their God after their own understanding. They make their God first and worship Him afterwards. I should advise you, however, to postpone coming to any conclusion at present. And if you should happen to die in the meantime, you will stand a much better chance, should a future exist, than some of those braying parsons."

On another occasion a man had told him that he was afraid of ghosts and that he felt sure that ghosts must be found round the crime-stained walls of a prison. " Not necessarily so," he replied. " You see, prisons have no family traditions to keep up. You want to go to some castle to see ghosts, where the ghost is handed over from generation to generation with the family jewels." Whenever he was asked for advice as to what to read to form the mind and style, he used to repeat, " Read Carlyle."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was one of the amiable traits of his character that he was ever ready to assist those who came to him for advice. He took pleasure in counselling young writers. The following is one of the many letters which he wrote : an answer to a youth who had written to him, sending

him a manuscript to read and asking him for guidance to literary success. The letter was dated from Tite Street:

“DEAR —,

“I have been laid up with a severe attack of asthma, and have been unable to answer your letter before this. I return you your MSS., as you desire, and would advise you to prune it down a little and send it to either *Time* or *Longman's*. It is better than many magazine articles, though, if you will allow me to say so, it is rather belligerent in tone.

“As regards your prospects in literature, believe me that it is impossible to live by literature. By journalism a man may make an income, but rarely by pure literary work.

“I would strongly advise you to try and make some profession, such as that of a tutor, the basis and mainstay of your life, and to keep literature for your finest, rarest moments. The best work in literature is always done by those who do not depend upon it for their daily bread, and the highest form of literature, poetry, brings no wealth to the singer. For producing your best work also you will require some leisure and freedom from sordid care.

“It is always a difficult thing to give advice, but as you are younger than I am, I venture to do so. Make some sacrifice for your art, and you will be repaid; but ask of Art to sacrifice herself for you, and a bitter disappointment may come to you. I hope it will not, but there is always a terrible chance.

“With your education you should have no difficulty in getting some post which should enable you to live without anxiety, and to keep for literature your most felicitous moods. To attain this end, you should be ready to give up some of your natural pride; but loving literature as you do, I cannot think that you would not do so.

“Finally, remember that London is full of young men working for literary success, and that you must carve your way to fame.

“Laurels don't come for the asking.

“Yours,

“OSCAR WILDE.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

Why Oscar Wilde returned to Former Friends—His Last Years in Paris—“Deaths are Apt to be Tragic”—Ernest La Jeunesse—His Magnificent Essay on Oscar Wilde—A Picture of the Poet in his Last Days—His Death and Funeral—My First Visit to his Grave—His Landlord's Story—Bagneux revisited—The Traffic in his Name—Literary Forgeries.

**I**T was stress of circumstance which drove Oscar Wilde to return to that companionship which had been the initial cause of his ruin. When he first came to Berneval, and before he had realized how entirely the world was closed against him, while he still hoped to be able to win a livelihood by his labour, he was firm in the resolution which he had formed in prison, to avoid the society of the men who had been his former associates. Speaking of one of them to André Gide, he said, as is reported in his own words by the French writer, “X. is writing me terrible letters; he says that he cannot understand me—that he cannot understand that I am not indignant against everybody—that everybody has acted odiously towards me. . . . No, he does not understand me; he can no longer understand me. But I repeat in each letter which I write to him, we cannot follow the same path. ‘You have yours; it is a very pleasant one; I have my own.’ His path is the path of Alcibiades; mine is now that of Saint François d’Assise.”

The time came, however, when, being without money, repulsed, abandoned, desolate, he could no longer resist

entreaties which offered to him companionship in the place of utter loneliness, friendship in the place of hostility, homage in the place of insult, and in the place of impending destitution a luxurious and elegant hospitality.

Of his life in Paris after this new-formed association had dissolved itself by the very weariness of things, many accounts have been given to the world. The friends who precipitated Wilde into the abyss endeavoured in his writings in the papers to persuade themselves and the public with them that after his ruin had been definitely consummated, his life was an easy one, not lacking in happiness. There are cited as attributes to this felicity the sympathy of certain of the minor French writers, the occasional hospitality of casual visitors to Paris, and the fact that he never had less to spend in one week than a sum which, laid out with prudence and economy, might suffice any orderly man to provide himself in Paris with the reasonable necessaries of existence. We have further been told that though "deaths are apt to be tragic" (I am quoting the *ipsissima verba* of one writer), "he was surrounded by friends when he died." The same writer adds, "And his funeral was not cheap; I happen to have paid for it in conjunction with another friend of his, so I ought to know."

As for my own observation of him at this time, my position was such that I did not care too closely to inquire into his. I was quite helpless, I could have helped in no way. The other day amongst some letters of Ernest Dowson's which were offered for sale in London, I came across one which reminded me that on a certain day in that summer of 1899 we had been one whole day without bread. I could not have joined him in a *café*, for I should not have had even the small



sum which throws open to the passer-by the doors of such establishments. From what André Gide relates in the article to which I have already referred, there were occasions when Oscar Wilde found himself in the same situation. Gide tells us that, finding Oscar one day in a *café*, as he was taking leave of him, the poor man drew him aside and said, "Listen. I must tell you. I am absolutely without resources."

As I wrote in the story of our friendship, "His last years were supremely unhappy. Poor, lonely, abandoned, he had little company but of those who hoped to prey upon his brain. Towards me he became more and more distant; the verminous parasites that clung to him fostered his wrong idea that, sitting in judgment upon him, I had condemned him. In melancholy and solitary peregrinations on the boulevards, which fifteen years before we had trod so triumphantly, we sometimes passed each other in silence, with only a faint wave of the hand—like two wrecked ships that pass in the night—

. . . Like two doomed ships that pass in storm  
We had crossed each other's way;  
But we made no sign, we said no word,  
We had no word to say. . . ."

The most valuable account of his last years which exists is an article written by Ernest La Jeunesse in the *Revue Blanche*. Ernest La Jeunesse is the name in letters of an Israelite genius called Cohen-Cahen. This young man sprang into fame with the first book which he published. He was at the time literary secretary to Anatole France. He is one of the most admirable writers that France possesses. He has the cultus of literary style. He is an artist of that rare and delicate fibre which one sometimes finds among men

of his race. To devote himself to art he prefers to undergo privation. I heard him once say to a man, "You, you write *des cochonneries*. I, in order to create literature, I starve." The writer so apostrophized revenged himself afterwards by telling me that Ernest La Jeunesse had no other employment in journalism than to write about the Academy. "It comes to this," he added, "that an Academician has to die, if Ernest La Jeunesse is to have a dinner." La Jeunesse's article on Oscar is a pure gem of literature. It might be commended to the perusal even of those who take no interest in its subject-matter. It demonstrates what moving effects the literary artist can produce by mere puissance of style. I know no piece of modern French prose which is worthy to stand by its side. It is in its way the best monument that has yet been raised to the memory of the great man whose agony it describes.

Here is, in his own words, the picture which he paints of Oscar Wilde after his return to Paris from Italy :

"Ses paupières lourdes s'appesantissaient sur des visions chères—ses succès. Il marchait à petits pas pour se mieux rappeler ; il aimait la solitude où on le laissait pour être plus avec celui qu'il avait été. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"Tout, dans sa face, avait le pli des larmes. Les yeux semblaient des ravines creusées d'un pleur pâle, la bouche à peine sanglante, épaisse comme un sanglot et un caillot mêlés, le menton douloureux se suivaient,

<sup>1</sup> "His heavy eyelids drooped beneath the weight of visions that were dear to him—the visions of his former triumphs. He walked with little steps, so as to allow his memory a freer play ; he loved the solitude to which the world abandoned him, for he found himself there in the company of the man he had been."

s'assemblaient sous les cheveux désespérés, dans cette bouffissure de chairs qui accompagne les crises [sans fin d'effroi et de navrement. . . .]<sup>1</sup>

The French writer lays stress on the poor man's impotence for all creative work :

"Fantôme ballonné, caricature énorme . . . Il voulait à la fois se bercer et se réveiller, se convaincre qu'il pensait toujours, qu'il savait encore. Il savait tout . . . Mais il lui manquait pour les écrire la table d'or de Sénèque—et la sienne."<sup>2</sup>

La Jeunesse refers to that passing acquaintance between Oscar Wilde and Major Esterhazy which gave rise to some malevolent comment in London, where Wilde was accused of taking part on that side of the Dreyfus affair which was not popular in England. The facts of the case were simply that Major Esterhazy was introduced to Oscar Wilde in a bar by an English journalist called Strong, and that the two were afterwards occasionally in each others' society, either in this bar or at a riverside resort called Nogent-sur-Marne. It should not be necessary to say that Oscar Wilde took no part in any agitation against Captain Dreyfus. His sympathies would have been on the side

<sup>1</sup> "His face was all one furrow, such as is ploughed by tears. His eyes were as the beds of rivers, hollowed out by torrents of pale tears. The mouth, well-nigh bloodless, and bulky, as if a sob and a clot had been kneaded together from which to mould it, joining itself to the dolorous chin, lay together with it under the mass of his woe-begone hair; in that puffy and bloated flesh which always goes with unending transports of alarm and sorrow."

<sup>2</sup> "A swollen phantom, an enormous caricature. . . . He wished at one and the same time to lull himself to sleep, to rouse himself to action, to convince himself that he still could think, that his knowledge had not left him. There was nothing that he did not know. . . . But to write these things down there were wanting to him Seneca's golden table—and his own."

of the man who had suffered; and as to anti-Semitism, he described it as both vulgar and ungrateful. "The Jews," he used to say, "are the only people who lend money." His relations with the Commandant were in any case of short duration. After the transactions in London between Esterhazy and Rowland Strong and their quarrel over the sale of some documents to the *Observer*, all dealings between the three ceased.

La Jeunesse declares that Wilde remained well dressed to the end: "Il resta jusqu'au dernier jour élégant de complet et confortable." This refutes the story which describes Wilde as creeping about in ragged clothes. At the same time Gide relates that on the occasion when he met him in the *café* where he spoke of his destitute state, his appearance had become shabby. "His hat was no longer so shining; his collar was of the same shape as usual, but was no longer so clean; the wristbands of his frockcoat were slightly frayed." Jean Joseph-Renaud relates that he met him once in a bar on the Boulevard des Italiens in a lamentable state of shabbiness. For my part, I may say that I never noticed his dress. It was his eyes, his forehead, that I used to look at. After his death, amongst some papers which his landlord at the Hôtel d'Alsace showed me, was a receipted bill from a minor English firm of tailors in Paris, referring to two suits which had cost seventy francs each. As tailor's charges go in Paris, a pathetic document to be found among the papers of one who had been the Beau Brummel of his day in London.

Here is a magnificent passage from Ernest la Jeunesse's article describing Oscar Wilde in the days before his last illness:

"Il nous faudrait ici des mots se précipitant, une

fuite d'espoirs, de verbe, de sourires, une chute frénétique de phrases, d'onomatopées dans une monotonie d'existence atroce et momifiée pour montrer le poète qui s'éteint, qui ne se résigne pas mais qui se livre et qui craint la mort au jour le jour, pour les hommes—en l'appelant d'égal à égal en sa chambre étroite d'un hôtel gris. Il a été à la campagne et en Italie, il veut l'Espagne, il veut retourner au bord de la Méditerranée : il n'a que Paris, Paris fermé à mesure, Paris qui ne lui offre plus que des trous où boire, un Paris sourd, un Paris affamé, hâtif, congestionné ici, pâle là, une ville sans éternité et sans mythe. Chaque jour lui apporte des souffrances : il n'a plus ni cour ni vrai ami, il tombe dans la pire neurasthénie. La gêne le harcèle : la pension de dix francs par jour que lui sert la famille ne s'augmente plus d'avances d'éditeurs : il lui faut travailler, écrire les pièces qu'il a signées, par traité,—et il lui est impossible de se lever avant trois heures de l'après-midi. Il ne s'aigrit pas, il s'achève : il s'alite un jour sous ce prétexte que, dans un restaurant, des moules l'ont empoisonné : il ne se relève plus que malade, avec une arrière-pensée de mort dont il mourra. Il conte alors toutes ses histoires à la fois : c'est l'amer et éblouissant bouquet d'un feu d'artifice surhumain. Ceux qui l'ont entendu au terme de sa vie dévider l'écheveau des ors et des pierreries tissés, des fortes subtilités, de l'invention psychique et fantasque dont il devait coudre et peindre la tapisserie de ses drames et de ses poèmes futurs, ceux qui l'ont vu nonchalamment et fièrement tenir tête au néant et tousser ou rire ses dernières phrases, garderont le souvenir d'un spectacle tragique et hautain, d'un damné impassible qui ne veut pas périr tout entier.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “We should need here words which rush forth in torrents, a headlong stampede of hopes, of intonations, of smiles, a frenzied downpour



He took a great delight in the Exhibition. He spent most of his last days there. "He was building anew his own palace in the midst of all those palaces."

This is the way in which that wonderful magician of style, Ernest la Jeunesse, describes Oscar Wilde's funeral:

"Mais voilà bien des détails : finissons-en. Treize personnes qui, en un dortoir de banlieue, se découvrent devant un cercueil tiré d'un numéro treize, un corbillard

of phrases, of onomatopæic words gathered in the monotony of a wretched and mummified existence, to show the poet as he dies away, who is not resigned and yet abandons himself, who fears death day by day amongst his fellow men, but who in the narrow room of his gloomy inn calls for it, equal to equal. He has been into the country and to Italy, he longs for Spain, he wishes to return to the shores of the Mediterranean: all that he can have is Paris, a Paris which shuts door after door against him, a Paris which has no longer more to offer him than holes into which he may creep to drink, a Paris which is deaf, a famished, spasmodic Paris, flushed here, there pale, a city without eternity and with no myth. Each day brings sufferings with it for him: he has no longer either a court or a true friend, he falls into the blackest neurasthenia. Money troubles harass him: the eight shillings a day which his family allows him are no longer supplemented by advances from publishers: he ought to work, to write the plays which by signed contracts he has undertaken to write,—yet he finds it impossible to leave his bed before three o'clock in the afternoon. He does not become embittered, he is simply dying out. One day he takes to his bed on the pretext that he has been poisoned by eating some mussels in a restaurant. When he rises from his bed again, it is like one who has made a bad recovery. He is haunted with a foreboding of death, which in the end will kill him. He then tells all his stories in one breath: it is the bitter yet dazzling final piece of a display of superhuman fireworks. Those who, at the end of his life, heard him unravel the skein of gold and jewelled threads, the strong subtleties, the psychic and fantastic inventions with which he proposed to sew and embroider the tapestry of the plays and poems which he was going to write, those who saw him proud and indifferent, affronting extinction, and coughing or laughing out his ultimate phrasings, will keep the remembrance of a sight at once tragic and lofty, the sight of a man damned yet impassive, who refuses to perish altogether."

boiteux à peine étoilé d'argent sale, deux landaus de duel en guise de voitures de deuil, une couronne de lauriers, des fleurs hagardes, une église, sans drap mortuaire, qui ne sonne point à la mort et qui n'ouvre au cortège qu'un bas-côté ; une messe basse vide de musique, une absoute scandée par des lèvres anglaises qui font du latin liturgique une bouillie d'Écosse non-conformiste, le salut magnifique d'un capitaine de la garde sur la place Saint-Germain-des-Prés, trois reporters qui comptent les assistants comme à l'anthropométrie, c'est là l'adieu de la Terre à un de ses enfants qui voulut la magnifier et étendre son songe, c'est là le glas tacite d'une vie de phantasmes et de superbeauté rêvée, c'est le pardon, c'est la récompense ; c'est, dans un matin hypocrite et qui se dérobe, l'aube de l'éternité!"<sup>1</sup>

During all this year I had been away from Paris. It was not until 1903 that I could muster up the courage to go and visit my friend's grave, or bear to listen to the details of his end. And, even then, I do not think

<sup>1</sup> "But enough of details; let us come to the end. Thirteen persons, who, in a suburban dormitory, uncover their heads before a coffin which is brought out of a number thirteen; a limping hearse, meagrely starred in dirty silver, two landaus, such as are used by duelling parties, to represent mourning coaches; a wreath of laurels, some haggard flowers; a church, where no mortuary cloth drapes the porch, where no bell tolls a funeral peal, which opens to the procession an only aisle; a low mass without music, an absolution scanned by English lips, which make of the Latin liturgy a Nonconformist porridge; the magnificent salute given by a captain of the guards on the square of St. Germain des Prés; three newspaper reporters, who count the people present, like detectives taking stock of prisoners in a prison yard—this was earth's farewell to one of her children who wished to glorify her and to extend the region of her dreams; this was the silent knell of a life of fantasies and dreams of supernatural beauty; this was the pardon, this was the reward: this—in the light of that fleeting and ambiguous morning—was the dawn of eternity!"

that I could have borne these emotions if I had not been accompanied. But there were two friends with me ; and one of these was a man who had had such great admiration for the poet's work, and had felt such great pity for the man's suffering, that he had written to him at the time of the catastrophe to offer him half his large fortune for acceptance—in a letter which, as it was left unanswered, can never have reached its destination.

It was indeed rather to pilot these two men that I paid my first visit to the grave. For my own part, my prompting was to try and disbelieve all that I had heard ; to fancy that the story of his sufferings and death was but one of those evil dreams with which the fevered days and nights of my long illness had perpetually been haunted ; that the friend of my youth had not perished, but far away from me walked glorious and triumphant, as I had known him in the distant years. It was to the only paper in London (*Reynolds's Newspaper*) which would print the dead man's name that, after my return home, I wrote an account of what I had seen and heard. It touched many hearts, and from all parts of the world<sup>1</sup> letters reached me saying that people were grateful to be shown how to feel sorrow for a man whom till then they had regarded as one against whom every heart must be closed. The following is what I wrote :

“ The irony of Fate was to pursue Oscar Wilde to the very end. The man whose genius, whose parts and performances so fully entitled him to the highest of those poor honours which humanity can give to its illustrious dead, is buried there where his admirers may almost look for him in vain.

“ He lies in Bagneux.

<sup>1</sup> I published the article simultaneously in Berlin in *Die Nation*. The two versions were reprinted all over the world.

“ He should be amongst poets ; he is surrounded by the petty *bourgeois* of the Parisian suburbs.

“ He would not read de Maupassant when he lived, for he took, he said, no interest in the people of whom de Maupassant chose to write. Fate has doomed him to their companionship for ever.

“ The *fosse commune*, where his dust would have mingled with that of the wanton, the pauper, the thief, with the dust of those to whom his large heart went out, victims like himself of the cruel order of social things, would have been desired by him rather, could he have ordained his obsequies, than his present promiscuities.

“ His is the 17th grave in the 8th row of the 15th division. The graveyard is immense ; it presents not one of those features which one associates with places where poets rest. There are no trees, and so there will be no birds to sing his lullaby. The ‘lin, lan, lone of evening bells’ will never ripple over his deserted tomb.

“ Bagneux is so remote and can only be reached with so much difficulty that here, indeed, the dead die quick. The vast plain was all deserted, save where one busy widow, with brush and napkin, was tidying her husband’s grave. She was very active, dusting here and sweeping there, *faisant son petit ménage*, and was a very pleasant sight. But she was all alone, and her presence served but to make the desolation of the place more evident.

“ Bagneux is the ultimate, dim Thule, and as I drove out there the other day with two Englishmen, whose admiration for the dead poet had brought them to Paris for this very pilgrimage, I could not but recall a jest which he once made to me—that Passy, where I was living, was a place so distant from the world that when cabmen drove one there they kept getting down to ask

for something on account of the *pourboire*. One passes through Montrouge and out by the Orleans Gate and then across a vast suburb, le Grand Montrouge, which at night must ring with the cries of folk in danger. We stopped at many florists on the way, for my friends wanted to buy roses for the grave. 'He has told us himself,' said one of them, 'what flowers to put there—red roses and white roses'—and he quoted some lines from the *Ballad of Reading Gaol*. But there were no roses to be had anywhere, and at the last shop before the cemetery was reached white lilac was bought and some yellow flowers. I noticed that this shop was at the corner of the Rue Alphonse Daudet, and all that Daudet had said about him rushed back upon my mind.

"We searched for him for a long time, for though the site was known to our guide, the landlord of the hotel where he died, the geography of these places changes with startling rapidity. New landmarks are ever springing up; the old landmarks as rapidly disappear. It was not until a chart had been consulted at the office of the gate that we found him. He lies next to a woman whose name was Bienfait. The gravestone is brown, and bears, beside his name and age, a verse from Job. He had laughed long in life, and it was to the Job of tears that one had to turn to find his epitaph.

"The grave had a neglected look; weeds covered the valley where the mound had been engulfed. Yet a blue flower, weed itself, had chosen this spot, and none other, where to live its short, unfragrant life. One of the Englishmen dug it up, and will plant it again in England, and perhaps the little blue flower will be sad and die for Heimweh.

"After we returned to the hotel—the Hôtel d'Alsace, in the Rue des Beaux-Arts—we visited the room where



he died, a small bedroom on the first floor, looking out on the courtyard. The hangings of the bed, the window-curtains, the upholstery of the furniture were of the colour of the lees of wine. Behind a rickety table a maculated couch squatted like a toad. All was faded and threadbare. The impression was that of poverty masquerading at comfort. Chatterton's garret in Brook Street must have presented a sight less poignant.

“‘There he lay,’ said the landlord, pointing to the bed, ‘with ice on his head, and in his delirium he swore at his pain. He kept raising his hands to his head to try and ease his torture. The doctors said that they ought to cut into the head, but that there was no sign to guide them where to cut, and so no operation could be tried. He must have suffered greatly, for he swore and swore. And there he died—in my arms. It was two o’clock of the afternoon.’

“The man spoke in short, gasping sentences, under evident emotion, and I recalled pointing out to Wilde that artists have ever used the short sentence when they have described some tragic thing. It is like the words of a messenger of evil tidings, who has run a long way to tell them, and, breathless, can find but gasping words. So Goethe in the last lines of the *Sorrows of Werther*, and so Wilde also at the end of *Dorian Gray*.

“We heard that before he became ill of his final illness—the meningitis which killed him, and which is only the scientific name for the ‘broken heart’—he had worked hard. What he wrote was given to others, to be published as their own.

“‘He used to work at nights, all night long. As a rule he would come in at one o’clock in the morning and sit down to his table, and in the morning he would show me what he had written, and “I have earned a

hundred francs to-night ! ” he would say. And he seemed pleased and proud to think that he had earned a hundred francs in one night. But, ’ continued the landlord, ‘ the man who employed him was very irregular about sending him his money, and this used to vex Monsieur Wilde very much. He was always *inquiet* until the payment came, and used to rail against his employer. Towards the end it became very difficult for him to write, and he used to whip himself up with cognac. A *litre* bottle would hardly see him through the night. And he ate little, and he took but little exercise. He used to sleep till noon, and then breakfast, and then sleep again till five or six in the evening.’

“ The landlord of this hotel will be remembered hereafter. He was very good to the poor poet. At first he had been suspicious, and, indeed, had forced him to leave his house, his bill being unpaid. He afterwards met him in the street, and heard that he had been forced to leave his new hotel also because he could not pay, and was literally without a shelter. Thereupon this kindly man bade him return to his old room, in God’s name ; and, more than this, went and fetched away his things from the hotel where they were being detained, and paid the bill. It was a bill for £5. He has the receipt still, and shows it with some pride. When Wilde died he was heavily in this man’s debt.

“ One of my friends asked the landlord if he had any little thing that had belonged to the poet which he would care to sell him as a *souvenir*. . . . But there was the ink-bottle that he had used—a trumpery little china thing, worth a few pence perhaps. The Englishman gladly gave a louis for it.

“ Of many evil days that day will ever be remembered by me as the very worst. There are things which one

should not know ; there are things which one ought not to know. And the punishment that results from seeking out the knowledge of them, bitter as it is, is only too well deserved. This also is one of those faults which, as Goethe says, avenge themselves on earth."

In July of the following year I revisited the grave, and once more wrote and published my narrative. It appeared in the same journal. I was again accompanied.

"The revolving year has brought with it again the pious duty of pilgrimage to a remote and an abandoned grave. Abandoned in the fact, but now a spot on which the thoughts of many thousand people in many lands recurrently, and with ever-increasing sadness, fix themselves. For since I visited Bagneux churchyard in the summer of last year, the force of the man's irrepressible genius has carried his name north and south and east and west, and the lament for his untimely end has wrung a thousand hearts. To speak of one country alone, there is at this moment in Germany a movement—a 'Wilde-Bewegung'—for the study of his works, the magnitude and universality of which surprises even those who, from a sense of immanent justice, first set it afoot. The people crowd to see his plays, the theatres of the Fatherland ring with enthusiastic applause (of which the echo, alas! falls short of Bagneux graveyard), his books are snatched with eager hands from the heaped-up shelves of the smiling publishers, and it is difficult to miss seeing in the publications of any one week in Germany some eulogy of the work he did or some lament for the unspeakable tragedy of his life and death.

"This time, also, I was not alone, and of the two men who accompanied me one had come many thousand miles across the sea with little other purpose of pleasure

or of profit than what might accrue from imperious duty fulfilled, an act of justice done. With the other man, a day or two previously, I had undertaken to another exile's tomb another pilgrimage, and as we looked at the grave in Bagneux we could not but agree that most of what stood in Latin on the marble of St. Germain's might with equal truth have been written here also :

*Magnus in prosperis, in adversis major.*

“With what equal truth could these words be said of Oscar Wilde, from whose lips when disaster crushed him down never a complaint arose against those who had encompassed his entire destruction.

*Insignes Aerumnas dolendaque nimium fata.*

“One might search the world's history through for sorrows more remarkable than were his, for a fate than his more entirely to be deplored.

“It would have been a hopeless task for me, guided by memory alone, to seek out the grave in that ever-shifting landscape. Since a year ago many are the leaseholders of these lands, for whom their tenures of the tomb could not be renewed by poor relations, who have been ejected from their silence and repose and now mingle their bones in the heaped-up ossuaries of the common ditch. In every avenue of the hushful city one sees placed for removal by the dealers in odds and ends, wreaths of wire, tombstones, iron railings, and crosses, which shall no more cast the promise of their shadows upon a violated grave.

“If you would lie in peace in Bagneux graveyard until the loud *réveille* of the Judgment Trump there must be paid the equivalent of £21 so many shillings

and pence. For this sum there is granted a fee-simple to eternity.

"I betook myself accordingly to the office, where, behind desks and counters, sit, amidst large ledgers, the traffickers in sleep. Here, day by day, is issued the list of those who, having had the share of rest for which their friends have paid, receive their *congé*, and in default of further payments from their assigns and heirs, are destined to the rude and premature awakening of the digger's spade.

" 'We have no man of that name here,' said the clerk to whom I had addressed myself, 'but there is a lady. . . .'

"And he pointed to an entry in the ledger for December, 1900.

"His error arose from the fact that he could not understand the Irish forenames that follow on the Christian name which a kingly<sup>1</sup> godfather—a poet himself, also—bestowed on the poet child. When I had pointed this out to him, he copied on to a printed form the *viaticum* that should lead me to the spot from which my regretful thoughts are rarely absent. Here is a copy of this *viaticum*. It may serve for

<sup>1</sup> King Oscar of Sweden, whom, as Duke of Östergötland, Wilde's parents first met during a tour in Sweden. It was some time before the birth of Oscar, and the extraordinary impression produced upon the Irish poetess, Speranza, by the princely poet who afterwards became King of Sweden, revealed itself in the resemblance which could afterwards be traced between the son who was born later and his kingly godfather. In a biographical work about himself which King Oscar sent to me, when I was staying in Stockholm, I found, among other portraits, one of them as a young man which reminds one very much of Oscar Wilde at about the same age. The book in question is Dr. Josef Linck's *Konung Oscar*, published by Adolf Bonnier, Stockholm, and the portrait I refer to appears on page 39 of that volume.



other pilgrims who tread the maze of that city of the dead.

No. 5134 bis Ad F.	
PRÉFECTURE DE LA SEINE	
DIRECTION	REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
des	LIBERTÉ-ÉGALITÉ-FRATERNITÉ
AFFAIRES MUNICIPALES	
CIMETIERE PARISIEN	
6 Bureau	d.:
SITUATION DE SEPULTURE.	
Nom. ....	<i>O. Wilde</i>
Date de l'inhumation. 3 X, 1900.	
15 Division.....	
8 Ligne.....	
No. 17.....	
Paris.—Imp. Henon.	FORMULE No. 28.

“ ‘This gentleman,’ he added, as he closed the powdery register, ‘is entitled to his concession until October, 1905.’

“In Line 8 of Division 15, Grave No. 17 could be discerned from afar. It was the one abandoned of men. It was the one that was flowerless, save where from the adjoining grave a creeping plant throwing out the odorous embraces of its tiny tendrils had begun to mask with the white of its blossoms and the green of its foliage the tawdry wirework of the metal wreath—on which the words, ‘Les Employés de l’Hôtel’—which hung on its little hook to the left of the memorial stone.

“For it is not fable. We know it is truth. Between the flowers that are set in the earth and those

in whom their common Creator has implanted with the love of beauty the love of flowers also, there is a mysterious bond of sympathy. Human contempt and human ingratitude may heap the accursed poet's tomb with ord and shard, the flowers will still creep and creep towards it.

God's kindly earth  
Is kindlier than men know.

When the wind is blowing from the north or from the south down the aisle of tombs, the flowers and flowered bushes on graves which had been less neglected never let it pass this way or that without entrusting to its strong pinions some coloured and scented message for the poet. But many of these perforce go astray. The north wind is impetuous and the south wind fitful. So I fancy the creeping plant determined to do better than all the rest. It might have turned to the right, but there was a poet's grave to the left, and so to the left it turned. And it has begun by masking what is most ugly there—the metal wreath of the two metal wreaths which by their isolation and their uncomeliness only impress the visitor with the utter forlornness of the place. When it shall have transformed into coloured and scented strands of flowered beauty the hideous metal wires, it means to embower the gravestone, and when next year comes we shall find the grave lying cool and fragrant under a canopy of green and white.

“ Besides the two metal wreaths, one from the servants at the inn where he died, and the other, ‘À Mon Locataire,’ from a kindly landlord, the only tribute of affection and remembrance that marks his grave is a tiny crown of immortelles, its immortality already eaten in upon by the gnawing tooth of decay.

“ My two companions heaped the grave with flowers.

Against the memorial stone they heaped an armful of arum lilies, gold and silver. At the head of the grave—his last poem has told his friends how to deck his tomb—a growing red rose was set, and there, where the great heart aches no more, a white rose was planted. Elsewhere red roses and white roses in profusion, so that the grave was one nosegay.

“ This is the inscription on the memorial stone :

OSCAR WILDE.

OCT. 16TH, 1854 — NOV. 30TH, 1900.

Verbis meis addere nihil aude-  
bant et super illos stilla-  
bat eloquium meum.

JOB XXIX. 22.

R.I.P.

“ The singularly inept translation of this verse from Job in the English Bible reads as follows : ‘ After my words they spake not again ; and my speech dropped upon them.’

“ From the cemetery we returned to the Hôtel d’Alsace, which is No. 13 of the Rue des Beaux-Arts, and visited the room where he died.<sup>1</sup> It is furnished exactly as it was in his day, and with the same articles of furniture. There was the bed on which he died with its soiled curtains of the colour of lees of wine. In front of the squatting sofa stands his rickety table. That was all the furniture in the room. Between the end of the bed and the wall, into which a cupboard was let, were

<sup>1</sup> It is the intention of Oscar Wilde’s executors eventually to remove the body to a permanent resting-place in one of the cemeteries in Paris. Père-Lachaise will, I believe, be chosen. In any case the grave in Bagneux would have to be disturbed, as the *concessions* in that part of the cemetery are only temporary ones.

a few book-shelves. The fireplace is opposite the sofa, the mantelpiece, as usual in French apartments, 'orné de glaces'—with a soiled and tawdry mirror. On the mantelshelf was a massive clock of metal and marble, the 'motif' being a crouching lion.

"Of the property which the poet left behind him in his room there still remain in the hands of the kindly landlord, Monsieur Dupoirrier, two large trunks, a small paper parcel, and a chagreen case. In the leathern case is the Privaz syringe with which in the last months of his slow agony he sought the Nepenthe of morphine.

"'I was constantly giving him injections,' said Monsieur Dupoirrier, 'to calm him, for he suffered dreadfully.'

"It appears from what the landlord told us that hardly a week passes but that some visitor from foreign lands comes to the hotel and asks to be shown the room where Oscar Wilde died. One gentleman—he is a wealthy manufacturer from the Midlands—always insists on occupying this room, although it is one of the least cheerful in the none too cheerful house.

"'It has become quite a place of pilgrimage,' says Monsieur Dupoirrier.

"What interested us most of all was what the two large trunks contained—the books which he had collected during his stay in the hotel.

"'He was a great reader was Monsieur Melmoth,' said the landlord. 'One rarely saw him without a volume in his hand. He would sit for hours in the yard there sipping his *apéritif* and reading.'

"Yet the books showed little sign of usage. Most of them were uncut. In very few was there the sign that Oscar Wilde had read them with attention. In the old days, when a book interested him, he was wont, as

he read it, to tear off a corner of the last page and roll it up and put the pellet in his mouth, as though actually tasting the quality of the work. Amongst the three hundred odd volumes in the two trunks there were many French novels, a Huysman or two, and of the novels those that seemed to have been most read were the *Cousine Bette* and *Eugénie Grandet*. I remembered how, twenty-one years ago, in a hotel not very far from where we were sitting, he had talked to me of Balzac and of his admiration for these very two books. Amongst the English books were Farrar's *Little by Little*, and Hornung's *The Rogue's March*. The latter, I believe, had been bought less for the story than because of the scenes of prison life in England and in the Colonies which it describes. For—and this was a pathetic circumstance which impressed itself deeply upon me—the pity which was aroused in his heart for the victims of our hideous English prison system, with all its coldly calculated and cynical cruelty, whilst he was a prisoner in Wandsworth and Reading Gaols, had not been allowed to die out after he had regained his liberty. He seems to have collected and to have read everything that he could lay his hands upon which treats of prison life in England—books and magazines. There were copies of the *Nineteenth Century*, with disquisitions by Du Cane, and there were popular sixpenny magazines, in which articles had appeared on the personal experiences of convicts. And amongst the books that had been read, I found a copy of the second edition of Howard on *Prisons*, with the corner of page 51 turned down, where the noble John pleads for 'more humane treatment of prisoners in the articles of food, lodging, and the like.' Amidst the forlorn makeshifts and mysterious expedients of his disordered life, there may have been in the mind of this



unhappy man the firm purpose that in the days to come, when his voice should be heard again, and when energy and power should have returned to him, he would write another plea for the poor wretches whose life he had shared during two long years of year-long days.

“The last of his books at which I looked was a copy in two volumes of a French translation of Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*. Of this only the first sheet or two had been cut. I could see him laying it aside with a groan. In Russia, for even the lowest outcast, there is the hope of a rising up from even the deepest depths of social degradation. In England the man who falls, falls never to rise again. He would know that, he would feel that, and the volume would slip from his loosened fingers.”

I have only a few words to add. When I was writing the *Story of an Unhappy Friendship* I received from a publisher in Paris a letter in which he informed me that before his death Oscar Wilde had translated for him *Ce Qui Ne Meurt Pas*, by Barbey d’Aurevilly, and that he was going to publish the translation under Wilde’s name. In perfect good faith I was thus deceived, and in the last pages of my book depicted my poor friend thus employed in his dingy lodging. There was such irony in the circumstance that it seemed to me that it could not be otherwise than true. When the translation was published and had come into my hands, it needed but the perusal of the opening sentences to show me that I had been duped. The imposture has repeatedly been exposed in the press, but the book-sellers still continue to advertise this clumsy version from some proletarian and prurient pen as the work of a master of English prose. They do worse. They include amongst the list of his books that foolish composition of an inadequately birched schoolboy, *The*

*Priest and the Acolyte*, which was written, as everybody who was at Oxford at the time knows, by a callow youth named B——, anxious to display of what great wickedness he was capable. He is now a clergyman of the Church of England, and we will hope that he finds in his holy books a justification for having allowed another man to bear the burthen of his own sins for all these years.

I remember that when I was told that Oscar Wilde had been working on a book of Barbey d'Aurevilly's, I felt regret that he had been unable, in his days of abandonment and penury, to draw inspiration from the example of that great man in his last days. Barbey d'Aurevilly used to say that his books were read by thirty people only. Popular success, the applause of society, were altogether denied to him. This was never allowed to interfere for one hour with his steady progress along the path which he had traced out for himself. The artist who is truly great disregards with the same serene and lofty indifference both the applause and contemptuous silence of the outer world. Oscar Wilde should have remembered the lofty example of George Meredith, for whom his admiration as an artist was unbounded. In a letter to me that great man, inviting me to his house, warned me that it would be but "an unsuccessful novelist living in a poor cottage" whom I should come to see. It is said of Wilde that during that illness, of which *La Jeunesse* speaks as the forerunner of his fatal malady, he spent all his time in reading Balzac's novels for the hundredth time, defeating the gloom of his bedchamber, and celebrating this symposium with his immortal patron by flooding his room with the light of many and superfluous flambeaux. In a book about Balzac's life which he used to read at the

time when I first met him, he had made himself familiar with the story of the sufferings, penury, and humiliation which throughout all his career the French author had undergone. It had taught him nothing. In this book there was a passage describing how Balzac, being too poor to furnish and decorate his house in the country near Paris, wrote up in charcoal on the bare, unpapered walls, "Here, tapestries from the Gobelins"; over the mantelpieces, "Here, Venetian glasses"; on the naked boards of the floor, "Here, carpets from Persia and Turkestan." It had taught him nothing. This great dramatist, who by his *Duchess of Padua*, at least, takes his place in the Elizabethan pleiad of playwrights, forgot the barren planks, from which the Elizabethan masterpieces, as from a jumping-board, leaped to the stars. Accessories were essential to him, stage properties, accoutrements, lights, effects—in his life as in his work.<sup>1</sup> It has been said of the great Napoleon that it was not for strategical purposes alone that he always began his battles by thundering discharges of artillery. He found in its reverberating clamour the inspiriting stimulant of his bellicose frenzy. His genius awoke at the roar of the cannon. To Oscar Wilde applause was as necessary as to Napoleon the bellow of war. But the dramatist needed his encouragement by anticipation, before the medley was engaged, before issue had been joined, drew bills for discount on a bankrupt credit, and wrote his "Vos Plaudite" as the initial word of dramas never to be written.

<sup>1</sup> And so, too, were they necessary to Barbey d'Aureville, whom he so admired. But Barbey contented himself with a cloak of red samite, which he wore when he was writing, and a kind of throne on which he seated himself when receiving visitors in his poor lodgings in Montmartre. Imagination supplied the rest.

Some critics of my book have reproached me that I did not help them to understand his character. These must be of that critical calibre of which, writing to me in reference to some reviews of my book, a great English novelist said, “It is *marvellous* to me, this *extraordinary* ignorance, this so general ignorance, of the simplest psychological processes, on the part of English writers. Never, into the pudding of their brains, can one drive the difference between subjective and objective.”

But apart from that, who was I to venture to fathom the mysteries of that most complex soul? What more could I presume to do than to paint him *grosso modo* in a few of his simpler incarnations? One knew him, one saw him generous and good-hearted, childlike in simplicity and egotism, self-indulgent yet delighting in the happiness of others, exuberant in vitality, filled with enthusiasms, but subduing them. His aberrations, if admitted, still seemed incredible to those who had admired the singular purity of his words, the extreme reserve and prudence of his conduct in his saner moments.

I think that the man who got closest to the truth in his reading of Wilde's character was the author of the review of *De Profundis* which appeared in the *Times*, when he refers to his assumption of characteristics and qualities which were not his own, which indeed were alien to his true nature. And I think that one great mistake which Oscar Wilde made in life was to profess knowledge on subjects of which he had been too indolent to study the technique. There are certain things which not the intuition of the greatest genius who ever lived can impart. One has even to go to school and start at A B C under the shadow of the rod. There was nothing which he could not have done if

he had cared to master essential rules. Feeling that he might have attained, had he chosen to do so, to almost universal knowledge, he allowed himself to assume it. He wrote and spoke on many subjects on which he was not qualified to write or speak—not because the profound comprehension of them was beyond his reach, but because he had neglected the preliminaries essential to this comprehension. I believe that this was the reason why in Paris he never enjoyed that admitted mastership which was his in England. The French do not believe in accomplishment by sheer force of intuition. They train their future masters of the arts. They insist upon technical training for even the rarest genius. They send Talma, Rachel, Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin, Mounet-Sully to school. They have the Beaux-Arts and Rome for their painters and sculptors, and Rome and the Conservatoire for their musicians and composers.

His works give but a faint echo of his genius. “*Il passa sa vie à se parler.*” They remind those who had the privilege of knowing him as dimly of his soul-stirring utterances as do his published portraits recall his great personal beauty.



## CHAPTER XXVII

Emile Zola and Oscar Wilde—Zola's Extreme Reserve—A Few Facts of Literary History—The Pro-Zola Campaign—Vizetelly's Naive Admission—Zola asks Advice about going to London—"Sic Vos non Vobis"—The Dreyfus Affair—The Story of an Interview—The Zola Trial—His Resentment against me—Our Final Meeting—My Collaboration with Daudet—"My First Voyage"—Two Strange Callers—How we Parted—At Daudet's Door—The End.

**I**T was particularly impressed upon me with what suspicion the artistic worker in France looks upon the man who, whilst leading the indolent and luxurious life of a fashionable dandy, still claims to rank as a creative artist, when, in 1892, I took Oscar Wilde to Zola's house and introduced him to the great novelist.<sup>1</sup> Another English gentleman of high social standing accompanied us, wishing also to be presented to Zola. At that time Zola was anxious to conciliate public opinion in England; and beyond that, he and I were then upon such excellent terms that the mere fact that I had brought a visitor to his house would have sufficed to ensure for him at least a courteous welcome. From the very first moment, however, when they met, Zola evinced his dislike for, and distrust of, Wilde. His face assumed a half-puzzled, a half-suspicious air, as though he were in doubt whether

<sup>1</sup> In a book of *Confessions*, published last year in London, it was stated that Oscar Wilde had always refused to make the acquaintance of Zola on the ground that he disapproved of the immorality of his books. This statement was pure invention.

some practical joke were not being played upon him.<sup>1</sup> He showed all those signs of extreme nervousness which were to be observed in him when social observance was putting constraint upon him. I never saw him wag his foot more vigorously than on that occasion, and during the whole interview I was in fear that at any moment he might bring it to a close with that *brusquerie* which he could sometimes assume towards visitors who were not welcome to him.

When we had got outside, into the Rue de Bruxelles, I said to Oscar, "I have just witnessed the first meeting between the ant and the cicada of La Fontaine's fable, and have realized the scene which is only indicated in the subsequent conversation between the two." Alas! the parallel was to be carried out to the end. Wintry days were to come upon the singing cicada, and the ant was to refuse its sympathy here also. To be quite exact, I am not certain that it was because of utter want of sympathy for Wilde that Zola, with a certain brutality of expression, refused to sign the petition to the Queen which was got up by some young men of letters in Paris to pray for the release of the prisoner. It was one of Zola's rules of conduct not to interfere in such matters, as though he grudged to others the benefits of that influence which he had acquired with such difficulties for

<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde bore no resentment to Zola for the coldness of the reception accorded to him on this occasion, and though Zola's work appealed in no way to his artistic or critical senses, he was always ready to defend him against English public opinion as it was then. I have the record of one of his remarks in Reading Gaol. "I once said to him," my informant tells me, "that it was a pity that there was no English Zola." He said, "The English people are too hypocritical to tolerate a Zola." The conversation then drifted to women writers, for whom he expressed contempt, because they never, he said, wrote any masterpieces."

himself. It may be remembered that on a previous occasion he had refused, though not with hostile remarks, to associate himself with a movement for the release of the anarchist writer, Jean Grave, a refusal for which he was most bitterly reproached after he had espoused another cause with such vigour.

Zola's early sufferings and the hard struggles of his career had embittered him against humanity. He accorded his friendship, his confidence even, most charily. I should even now hesitate to speak of myself as having been his friend. I do not think that any one who only came to know him in middle life can claim this title. In his later years he became gracious and kindly, but I think that his heart never opened to any single new acquaintance. The few friends whom he admitted to that title were men who had been young with him in the early struggles. If warm advances were made towards him, he would take, on his side, one faltering step forward to meet them, and immediately draw two steps back. I remember that when I sent him a copy of the book I wrote about his life and about my dealings with him, I received from him, some days later, two letters of acknowledgment and thanks. He had been in doubts about my address, and, having written one letter to me to one address, a few hours later wrote a second letter to another place. I received them at the same time. The first letter which I opened began, "Dear Sir," and ended with the French equivalent of "Yours truly." It contained a courteous acknowledgment of my book, and informed me of the fact that it had been written because a letter posted earlier in the day had inadvertently been so addressed that he believed that it would not reach me. The second letter began, "My dear Sherard," spoke of my book as "that fine monument which you

have erected for the edification of my friends, the English," and concluded with expressions of warm gratitude and friendship. This was the one which he had written first. It was the step forward to meet my advances. The second one was the drawing back.

It is not my purpose here to repeat over again the story of my long acquaintance with Emile Zola, as it was told in my book about him. In this place I will confine myself to certain incidents which passed between us after that book was written. But before doing so I desire to say that what in the beginning prompted me to seek out Zola's acquaintance and constitute myself one of his first apologists in England was the indignation which I felt at the judgment which at that time had been passed by certain in my country on the man, for whom I had a profound respect, and on his work, which had won my deepest admiration. This was just after the prosecution of Vizetelly. My connection with the London press was at that time an influential one, and it was, thanks to this fact alone, that I was enabled to make his cause publicly my own.

In those days it was as difficult to mention Zola's name in a public print in England as afterwards it became difficult to mention Oscar Wilde. I will add that it was fully as imprudent, from a worldly point of view, which concerned me not at all. This campaign, which culminated in Zola's first visit to England, was initiated under the difficulties described. Many editors refused to allow me to speak of the man or of his work in the publications under their control. I remember receiving a letter from Sir Walter Besant, in which he said that, though he sympathized with me in the matter, it was hopeless to try and go against public opinion in England, "where they will not hear of Zola."

In a recent biography of Zola, published in London, I find various slighting remarks about the bearing of William Stead towards him at this period. Nothing more unjust has ever been written. It was mainly thanks to the broad-mindedness and insight of that most able of editors, that, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I was able gradually to awaken first curiosity, next interest, and finally sympathy in a subject which at the outset was under social taboo. In those days my signed letters from Paris in that journal were very widely read. I had a lofty tribune and a large audience. In 1890 the *Daily Graphic* was founded, and here, too, thanks to the sympathy of one of the best-read journalists in London, I was allowed to write on Emile Zola. By this time other men in England were taking up the cause. Mr. Grein, of the Independent Theatre, had the courage to produce *Thérèse Raquin* in 1891, and to show England the profound morality of Zola's teachings. Elsewhere a new translation of his works was prepared for private circulation, so that those who had been only able to read the books in the illiterate English of badly paid translators might be induced to form another opinion.

But even in the following year, 1892—that year memorable in the history of literature, when *La Débâcle* was published—Zola's name was still held in such abhorrence in England that, as Vizetelly naïvely confesses in his biography, it was only poverty and want of other employment which first prompted him to undertake the translation of that work. He relates in an interesting passage the trouble he had to dispose of this translation, and the rebuffs he received until he found in Mr. Kibblewhite, of the *Weekly Times and Echo*, an editor who had the good sense to open his columns to the English version of a masterpiece of fiction, and gain for himself the high



distinction of having first made it known to the English peoples.

I have no feeling of pique at seeing others eating the honey of my own mellification. When I had shaken hands with Zola at the Métropole Hotel in London, after the dinner given to him by the Authors' Society, I had received in full the reward of what I had done. I must, however, refer to a further incident in connection with the publication of *La Débâcle*. Vizetelly relates that he deemed it prudent not to attach his name to the translation which was published in the *Weekly Times and Echo*. I had no such hesitation, although in my case there was much to lose and nothing, in the worldly sense, to gain. I felt proud to associate my name with such a work, and in writing, as a preface to the publication of the story, the long article couched in the form of an interview with Emile Zola, which appeared in that paper on February 13, 1892, I not only signed it with my name, but also gave my full address, so that the many correspondents who in the past had written letters of abuse to me for my admiration for Zola might know where to send me their further insults.

One day in 1893, Zola sent round to my house to ask me if I would come and see him that evening, saying that he wished to consult me on an important matter. At the hour appointed I went to his house accompanied by another Englishman. Zola then told me that he had received from the Institute of Journalists in London an invitation to come over, together with other prominent Frenchmen, to the annual gathering of that society which was to be held that year in the metropolis. "What I want you to tell me," he said, "is first what is this Institute of Journalists? Has it any influence?" He then said, "I have no wish to see London, and I have

no desire to be fêted. If I consent to go, it will be with a view of advancing interest in my books in England. I shall look upon it as *une affaire de réclame* purely and simply. Do you think that with this object in view it will be advisable for me to go? My own inclination at present is to refuse." I said, "You certainly ought to go. People in England have been taught to consider you an obscene monster. You figure in the public eye there as a man of libidinous habits, with, probably, the reddest of noses. You must go and show them that you are a gentleman of respectable appearance—respectable is our great word; that your manners are polished; that you do not get habitually or even occasionally intoxicated; that your conversation is singularly free from coarse allusions and reprehensible expressions; in one word, that you are *un monsieur bien propre et bien convenable*. You will be seen at this gathering by journalists from all parts of the Three Kingdoms. These will be proud and delighted to have met you, and they will make it known, *chacun dans son patelin*, what kind of man you really are." He said, "Thank you; that is exactly what I wanted to be sure about. I shall accept this invitation."

I accompanied him to London. In the party were Magnard of the *Figaro*, Fernand Xau of the *Journal*, their wives, and other distinguished ladies and gentlemen, besides certain of my English colleagues in Paris, who in former days had derided my enthusiasm for Emile Zola, and had predicted that my public championship of his cause would lead to the ruin of my career. Now that the star was a rising one, they were glad to rush in in its wake. At Dover the party was met by the Continental manager of the London, Chatham, and Dover line and others. The public rehabilitation of Emile Zola had begun. On the way up to London, Zola was curious to know what

kind of a reception awaited him at Victoria Station. I said that it would no doubt be a cordial one, that a delegation from the Institute of Journalists would be there. "And," I added, "no doubt also the *fanfare de Londres*."<sup>1</sup> He said, taking me quite seriously and looking grave, "Do you really think so?"

I did not accompany him to any of the festivities arranged in connection with the gathering of the Institute, but I saw him constantly in the evenings, and I naturally attended the dinner given in his honour by the Society of Authors. This was certainly what gave him the greatest pleasure of any of the honours paid him in London. I was sitting at one of the lower tables, exactly at right angles to his seat, and so was quite close to him. More than once during that dinner he raised his glass to me in a friendly fashion, and afterwards when I met him in the vestibule of the hotel, outside the dining-hall, he rushed forward and shook me warmly by the hand. Before his departure he wrote to me that as he did not want to leave London without once more sitting down to table with his English friends, he proposed to give a dinner at the Savoy Hotel, at which he prayed my attendance. It was a most luxurious repast, but for me it was spoiled by the fact that one seat remained vacant. This was the seat of George Moore, who, Zola said, had not answered his letter of invitation. I knew that Moore had turned his back upon him, and that he had in preparation an article in which he was to explain why he had done so. This was the article which

<sup>1</sup> In every small French town and village even there is a "fanfare," a society of local musicians, whose band usually assists at municipal ceremonies. My remark was intended partly as a joke and partly to impress upon him, by contrast, the immensity of the metropolis which he was visiting for the first time.

afterwards appeared in the *English Illustrated Magazine*. I felt that, secure as Zola's position now seemed to be in England, the defection of Moore, whom I had always considered and still do consider one of the first, if not the very first, of our English novelists, might endanger that position, and at any rate give a great encouragement to his irreconcilable enemies. It quite spoiled the evening for me.

Very shortly after his return to France my book was published in London. It achieved nothing more than a *succès d'estime*. But being widely and most eulogistically reviewed, it sounded the final blast of trumpets of Zola's triumph over British prejudice. An English colleague of mine in Paris warned me that I should live to regret the day on which I had given it forth. There are few things in my literary career on which I look back with greater satisfaction. The other day, after reading the biography of Zola which Vizetelly published last year, without finding in it a single line to record the constant and unceasing struggle—carried on at every risk to myself—of which that book was the crowning stroke and final expression, I took down my volume from the shelves of my library and on the title-page wrote in fair writing a pentameter attributed to Virgil by Donatus.

I will pass over the next few years and come to November, 1897, when I had returned to Paris from London at the request of the editor of a great American magazine to write an account of the Dreyfus affair, as it stood up to that time. My account was a purely historic one. I recorded the facts of the case as they were then to be ascertained, and gave what had been my impressions at the terrible scene of the degradation. I have before me a copy of the manuscript, which covers forty-

four pages of typewritten paper, and which was published *in extenso* in a syndicate of all the leading newspapers in the United States. I find the following passage at the conclusion of the part dealing with the degradation, which, as ever since 1897 I have been branded by the Jewish papers as a Jew-baiter and "anti-Dreyfusite," I beg leave to reproduce here :

" Yet during the terrible penance of this march of infamy, despite the insults levelled at him like so many expectorations by many of those before whom he passed, in spite of the frantic menaces of the exasperated mob without, Dreyfus never once departs from his calm. With a courage that bordered on heroism, he marched firm and erect, with his head high up, and more than once he is heard to cry in a loud and steady voice, ' Vive la France! I swear that I am innocent.' As he passes before the assembled pressmen he cries, ' In the face of all France, I swear that I am innocent!' A reserve officer who is standing by answers with a ' Judas! Traitor! Jew!' Now he reaches the prison van. Here the gendarmes gather roughly round him. The click of handcuffs is heard, and it is seen that a human form is bundled with every gesture of disgust and loathing into the cart of infamy. The escort forms round it and the prison-van drives off. The drums roll, the band strikes up a merry, soul-inspiring march. Sadly is such music needed, for every heart here is very heavy—every heart is low. One by one the companies file off, and soon the large square is left empty. Only in the centre of the muddy waste is a little heap of refuse that glitters in the sun. It was all that remained of a soldier's glory, of the honour of a man."

My history of the case up to that day concluded with the following sentences: " At the same time it must be



said, that all those who have espoused the cause of Alfred Dreyfus are to-day more assured than ever that his innocence will be established. Bernard Lazare, only two days ago, declared to me that Dreyfus will be a free man within two or three months at the latest. The same opinion has been expressed to me in most emphatic terms by Monsieur Emile Zola, who has staked his popularity—indeed, his literary reputation also—on proving the innocence of Alfred Dreyfus.”

At that time Zola had only published his first writings in the *Figaro* on behalf of Captain Dreyfus. I saw him often during November, when he seemed calm. It was towards the beginning of December that he began to show signs of great exasperation. On December 9, I was at Daudet's house, and I asked Daudet, who was one of Zola's oldest friends in Paris, what, in his view, was Zola's prompting in setting himself thus against public opinion in France, when we knew that it was a rule of his life not to concern himself in the affairs of others. Daudet said :

“Il est furieux contre tout le monde. He was dining here last night, and seemed in a state of the greatest irritation. The fact is that he has been greatly exasperated at the public reception given to his articles in the *Figaro*, and especially by the ridicule that his description of Scheurer-Kestner as *un âme de cristal* has brought upon him. He seems to have fancied that it would be sufficient for him to say, ‘Dreyfus is innocent!’ for everybody to accept the fact. He has in the last year or two acquired a greatly exaggerated view of his own importance. He feels that nothing must go on in public in France in which he does not play a part. I believe that if they cut a woman's throat in Montmartre *il voudrait en être.*”

“And then there is another cause. In Paris to-day no interest whatever is taken in anything but this *affaire* Dreyfus. Nobody reads anything else in the papers; nobody talks about anything else. Zola's *feuilleton* ('Paris') which is appearing in the *Journal*, might just as well not be printed at all. Nobody is reading it; nobody speaks about it. That is what Zola cannot stand. I am suffering myself in exactly the same way. My 'Soutien de Famille,' which is coming out in the *Illustration*, is not being read by anybody; but I am not anxious on that account, for I know that after this excitement has cooled down my readers will all come back to me.”

He then went on to speak about the *braves gens* of the various court-martials whose good faith seemed to be impugned by the agitation. It was the last time I saw him. He died a week later. His words to me assumed by the circumstance the nature of a testament.

That he misread the character and motives of his old friend cannot now be doubted, but it was certainly not from any injustice or unkindness. I have noticed in life that the men who have the least comprehension of the true characters of the people about them are the very men whose art it is to depict character—great novelists whose very skill in the painting of imaginary men and women has secured their wide popularity. But the novelist knows what stuff his puppets are made of. The living man and all the mysterious inner workings which guide his actions are to him as closed as they are to all those to whom supernatural insight has not been given.

On that same occasion Daudet spoke to me in high praise of another man, a mutual acquaintance. He praised his entire loyalty, his singleness of purpose, and

he told me that I was fortunate to possess so true a friend. Already then the mask was peeling off this man's face. In the event he showed himself to have been all along a most unworthy person. In both cases Daudet's reading had been quite wrong.

On my return to England I was invited to contribute an article on the Dreyfus affair to the *Saturday Review*; and giving the facts as they then stood, I deplored Zola's action in the matter, because I knew what the result would be upon his life and career. I was walking just behind him at Daudet's funeral. He paced along, holding one of the strings of Daudet's pall, amidst the jeers of the populace. He looked crushed, utterly dejected. I felt that he was risking his health, his reason, his very life in a matter where his intervention was useless. Indeed, Zola's sacrifice was, if glorious to his name, entirely superfluous. It was at a far mightier dictate that the powers moved at a time when the Dreyfus incident could be used as the primary pretext for that action which during the last three or four years has entirely revolutionized the social order of things in France, dominated the army, cast the clergy adrift. My article was a true expression of occurrences and opinions in France.

During the whole of my career as a Paris correspondent I have always limited myself to giving, with all the scrupulous exactness and fidelity which I could compass, the true facts, the preponderating weight of public opinion. In this particular case the interests not only of justice were best served by such a line of conduct, but the cause also of the very man who was considered abroad the victim of injustice. The calumnies and lies which were spread broadcast over the world at this time served only to exasperate public opinion in France and to retard the day of justice.

Before leaving Paris I spent one afternoon in Zola's company at his house, listening to his views on anti-Semitism in general and in France in particular. He spoke with much fervour; but his views, broad and humanitarian as they were, were not such as to please the orthodox Jews. He proposed as a remedy for the antagonism of the two races that intermarriage which in the orthodox Jewish press is so constantly denounced. His fine pronouncements on that occasion I afterwards reprinted in full.

On January 24 of the following year, Mr. W. T. Stead received from Mr. W. R. Hearst, proprietor of the *New York Journal* (now the *New York American and Journal*) and *San Francisco Examiner*, a cablegram asking him to go to Paris and interview Zola for these journals. All attempts to induce Zola to open his lips on the case made by correspondents in Paris had failed. Mr. Hearst offered any fee that Mr. Stead cared to name by reply cable for the service. Mr. Stead cabled back to Mr. Hearst that the only man in Europe to whom Zola might be willing to talk was myself. Mr. Hearst then cabled to Mr. White, his correspondent in London, to find me and ask me if I would undertake the attempt. Mr. White telegraphed in various directions and to different parts of the world. At that time I was quietly reclining on a couch, smoking cigarettes and congratulating myself on being away from the frenzied turmoil of Paris in a club not more than a mile distant from Mr. Hearst's London office. Here the telegrams eventually "touched" me. I communicated with Mr. White, and went over to Paris the same evening.

On arriving there, after I had waited until a reasonable hour for calling upon Zola, I went to his house. He received me with his usual kindness, and declined

*même pour vous* to say a single word. However, one had faced greater difficulties in the quest of news than this. I sat down by his side on the divan in his dining-room and talked at him for nearly half an hour. I pointed out to him that some sort of statement was expected of him, and that by making me the agency through which it was given to the world he would put a stop to all the inventions which were being published in connection with his name. I laid before him several "fake" interviews with him which had appeared in various papers both in London and the States, and notably one from a big New York paper, which was headed in startling capitals running across three columns' width :

#### FRANCE REFUSES TO ALLOW ZOLA TO SEE DREYFUS FOR THE —

In this particular invention it was stated that Zola had been considering an offer from the proprietors of that journal to go out to the Devil's Island and interview Captain Dreyfus.

This impressed him a good deal, and in the end he consented to make a short statement through me. But he requested me to call again at nine in the evening, as he wished to have full time to consider what he might and what he might not say. I demurred at the postponement, for reflection might lead him to such prudence—I am here speaking purely in the character of a newspaper reporter—as would render his statement valueless. However, he insisted upon this condition. At nine o'clock that same evening I saw him again. He asked me to begin by denying in his name the authenticity of any of the "interviews" with him which had been published in any paper during the previous month. As



to the details of his trial, he said that he was bound by an oath to Labori not to divulge by a single word the plan of his defence. He then made the following statement, which I took down in his presence :

“ I deny with all the emphasis of which I am capable that I ever wished to insult the French army. It is a monstrous accusation. My books betray my deep affection for the French nation ; and what is the army, since the advent of universal conscription, but the nation in arms ? I have acknowledged over and over again the splendid heroism of the French army, and the readiness of each individual soldier to spring to arms at the first call by France.”

Zola spoke with deep emotion. He continued by saying :

“ I am not fearful of the consequences. In this trial the authorities dare not drive me to extremities. I am known as a man who cannot be too far trifled with.

“ I believe that in heart the Government is very sorry to have to prosecute me. I rejoice, however, in this prosecution, because whatever its issue may be to me, it must bring on a revision of the Dreyfus trial. After the Esterhazy trial people were saying the affair was now settled, and but for my action no doubt the revision would have been shelved. Now it must come.

“ The detention of Dreyfus in prison is a monstrous iniquity, and everybody behind the scenes knows it ; but delay is what they want, for numerous reasons. There are elections pending ; bargains have been made and must be kept by deputies who, by their vote yesterday, seemed to condemn my attitude. The election past, the revision, if applied for in due form, will be granted quite as a matter of course. Dreyfus' innocence

will yet be recognised and he will be a free man. It will be some time in coming, but it will come.

“The consequences of the trial cannot be very serious. To me a fine is trifling, and my imprisonment cannot be a long one. My books may suffer, but I have had no confirmation from my publisher of the report which appeared in the papers yesterday that my new book is being countermanded in large quantities by booksellers who had ordered stocks.

“I stand with Dreyfus' friends, entirely alone and unsupported. Everybody and everything are against us; the Government because of a blunder committed by the unthinking and illiterate middle classes, who cannot reason; the people because they are infected with this pestilent anti-Semitism.

“We have no papers but those of the smallest circulation. On the other side, in all the press of France, I am held up as the enemy of France, because foreigners approve of my attitude. Yet I receive many warm letters of encouragement from Frenchmen. It would break my heart were I not certain, as I again repeat, that truth will prevail. A great nation, thirsting for justice, will come to acknowledge the truth in the end—tardily, perhaps, but surely—as surely as the wave breaks on the rocks.”

I at once telegraphed this statement to London to be forwarded thence to New York. It is a significant fact that although this dispatch was “filed” at my end at the telegraph office at the Gare du Nord at 9.30 p.m., and ought in consequence to have been delivered in Fleet Street at the latest one hour afterwards, it did not reach Mr. White until three o'clock on the following morning. It had, of course, been sent down to the Ministry of the Interior for perusal before being forwarded on the wires.

On the 26th, Mr. Hearst cabled to me the whole text of a leading article which had appeared in the *Journal* and in the *Examiner* based on my despatch, requesting me to go and read it to Monsieur Zola. It was a stirring tribute to his courage and the justice of his cause. I went to Zola's house. I was received at once, and I showed him the numerous sheets on which this long cable was printed. I then began to translate the article to him. It throws some light on one side of his character that before I had read more than a hundred words of it, he put his hand on my arm, and said, "Voyons, mon ami, comment voulez-vous que cela m'intéresse?" ("Come, my friend, how do you expect that to interest me?").

At the further request of Mr. Hearst, I remained in Paris and attended Zola's trial. On the first day I came out of court with him during an adjournment, with a number of his other friends. As we were turning down the passage to the right from the Salle des Pas Perdus of the Criminal Court, a rush of yelling fanatics was made. The very evident purpose of these people was to assault Zola, perhaps to murder him. We closed round our friend and managed to hustle him into the cloak-room on the right of that passage before any injury had befallen him. For my part I received a blow intended for him which nearly broke my back.

At that time there were appearing in a London evening paper, with which I had formerly been connected, some unsigned articles in which Zola was violently attacked as a writer and as a man, in his person, his principles, and his very family. It was here first alleged that Zola descended from *una famiglia di Ghetto*. I presumed that Zola attributed the authorship of these articles to me, for one day as I was

passing in front of Madame Zola to gain my seat amongst the correspondents who were reporting the trial, she said, "Quel mauvais article vous avez fait contre mon mari!" ("What a nasty article you have written against my husband!").

The long trial involved a terrible strain, though when the graphologists were discoursing on the *bordereau*, one had the opportunity of enjoying a grateful repose. I was very uncomfortably placed—for on the afternoon of the second day of the trial a gentleman, the correspondent of a Viennese paper, had installed himself in my place, deleting the name of my paper upon the label, which was pasted in front of my seat, and inscribing that of his own journal. My good nature prevented me from causing him to be ejected. He was a bulky man, yet there was room for both of us if I contented myself with a cramped position. On the following morning, however, on reaching the court, I found that he had invited, to occupy the little place which had been left to me by his encroachment, another reporter, a Berlin co-religionary. This time I insisted on my vested rights, and the second intruder went away saying that he was going to get satisfaction. There was an advantage, however, to me in my position, because, as we were so crowded, I could not help but see the report which the Viennese correspondent was writing under my eyes. It was very typical of the way in which the outside public was being informed of the tendency and "atmosphere" of the trial. One morning I saw him write that Esterhazy was standing in the middle of the court, that everybody had turned his back upon him, that he stood there cowed with the consciousness of his infamy. I asked my neighbour if he would point out the Major

to me, for I knew that Esterhazy had not yet reached the Palais de Justice, and he laughed and said, "Das ist ja nur Alles malerisches."<sup>1</sup> Some time later that lie, with others, went off by the porter to be telegraphed to Vienna.

The trial interested me particularly from the vehemence of the passions displayed. I was at last able to realize the sittings of the Revolutionary Tribunal. I had told my editor from the first how the day would go; I had even given him in advance the sentences which would be passed. But none the less after the sentence had been read out, and I had escaped into the passage of the court to hurry home to see if my arrangements for the prompt transmission of the news to New York had been successfully carried out, I felt much moved, and indeed committed the imprudence of saying aloud, "C'est épouvantable!" ("It is dreadful!") This exclamation, which had been wrung from me by the sight of Zola facing the howling mob, might have cost me some serious injury. It was overheard by some men who were passing me at the time. They turned round menacingly, and but for the intervention of the two *gardes de Paris* who were on duty at the door of that passage, I should have been attacked by men who were in a state of excitement bordering on insanity. The next night I went to see Zola. His valet, who opened the hall-door in the house in the Rue de Bruxelles, said, on recognizing me, "I don't think that Monsieur Zola will see you. He is *très monté contre vous*." I sent him up to inquire, and he returned to say that the "patron" refused to see me.

I went out into the street and entered a small *café* round the corner, in the Rue de Clichy, where I sat

<sup>1</sup> "That is all merely for the sake of picturesqueness."



down and wrote a letter to Zola. It was written under great stress of emotion. I reminded him of our past friendship; I reminded him that during the very trial I had exposed myself in his defence; I added that it was in the order of human things that while he refused me his door, he accorded *à des cyniques bonshommes leurs grandes entrées*. I concluded by praying God to have him in His holy keeping. This letter I despatched to his house by a messenger, who presently returned with a note for me. The envelope contained Zola's card, and on it was written, "Come at nine." My eyes filled. An English journalist who had accompanied me and was sitting with me in the *café* burst out into mocking laughter at the sight of my emotion.

I returned at nine o'clock to Zola's house. It was the last time that I saw him on earth. He received me kindly, and asked me if my conscience did not accuse me of disloyalty towards him. I then learned that it was the articles in the evening paper attributed to me which had aroused his indignation. I assured him of my innocence in this matter. I told him that I had written nothing about him beyond the few lines in the *Saturday Review*, which I had sent him on the day of its appearance. I added that my reports day by day to America had invariably been couched in terms of sympathy with him, and I added, "You may say that there was no merit in that; that Hearst would not have printed anything derogatory to you. I assure you, however, *maître*, that I have never felt anything for you but the deepest loyalty and regret."

"Regret!" he cried.

"Yes," I said, "because you have no business in this affair. We cannot spare you for it."

He then repeated, "If your conscience absolves you."

We went on to talk of other things. It was obvious to me that he felt deeply the insult of being sentenced to imprisonment. I said to him at one time, "If you go to prison, shall you write while there?" He answered quite crossly, "You don't suppose that they will put me to making selvage slippers ("qu'ils vont me mettre à tresser des chaussons de lisière")."

His little dog, which was none too friendly to people not of the house, had climbed up upon the divan between us and thence on to my knees. I said, "Your dog at least does not take me for a traitor." He smiled at that, and was, I think, about to say something kind, when the servant announced the visit of the Socialist deputy, Gérault-Richard, a member of the very party which was to reap all the benefit of Zola's struggle, his sufferings, and the shipwreck of his career. I took leave of him then. He walked with me to the head of the stairs. We shook hands, and so we parted.

In writing about Alphonse Daudet I have no hesitation in calling him my friend. He was the first to give me that right. In ending the letter which he wrote me after my book on his life and work had been read to him, he said, "It is with good and solid friendship that one repays such things as these." ("Ces choses là se paient avec de la bonne et solide amitié.") It was in order to divert my mind from the terrible grief which had come upon me in 1895 that during his visit to London he proposed to me to write a book with him.

Once before his kindness had led him thus to assist another writer, Hugues Leroux, who has since come to high honours. But in that case I believe the younger man merely transcribed the master's words. In the writing of *My First Voyage*, *My First Lie*, a

considerable part of the work fell to my share. Certainly a large portion of the book was the story retold as Daudet had told it to me, written from hasty notes after an interval of two years, but there were other parts which were entirely my own.<sup>1</sup>

After his death, Monsieur Ebner, Daudet's secretary, asked me for my manuscript for translation into French. I gave it to him, and amongst Daudet's works now figures the story *Premier Mensonge*, which is a translation from my English. In England some anxiety was shown by certain critics, while unanimous in praising the delicate charm of the book (all Daudet's own) to minimize, as far as possible, my share in the work. Indeed, that to some reviewers seemed the main purpose of their reviews of the book. Daudet himself held his collaborator in no such contempt.

While we were working at this book in the Rue de Bellechasse two incidents occurred of a dramatic nature. One day, just as I reached the top of the staircase leading to Daudet's apartment, a well-dressed young man who had followed me up rushed past me and reached the door first. I thought that he was some friend of the family whom I did not know, and I readily

<sup>1</sup> By the alteration of one word in my preface to that book I have been represented as stating that I limited myself to the part of transcriber only. Some time before the book was written I published in the *Daily Chronicle*, after submitting the manuscript of my letter to Alphonse Daudet, the exact account of our several parts in the work. I said, "The first three chapters and the last three chapters are in notes only, for my exclusive elaboration. The arrangement of the incidents and the development of the characters were discussed at length between us, and, further, there falls to my share to put into a form acceptable to English readers a purely French tale. On the other hand, long passages were entirely taken down from Mr. Daudet's lips."

yielded precedence to him. While he was in Daudet's study I sat down in the antechamber on which the doors of that workroom opened. The visit was a long one. Suddenly I heard angry voices, and as though Daudet and the stranger were quarrelling. I was afraid that it might be indiscreet for me to remain where I was, and I was about to leave the apartment, intending to return later, when I heard the word "revolver" used. I then hesitated no longer, but flung open the study door and walked in. "What is this about a revolver?" I cried. I found Daudet sitting behind his desk, greatly agitated. He was holding a revolver, which shook in his hand. The stranger was bending over the writing-table in a menacing attitude.

"What's this about revolvers?" I cried again. The stranger turned, snatched up his hat, and bolted from the room. I cried out, "Shall I stop him, master?" Daudet shook his head.

It was some minutes before he recovered sufficiently to give me an account of what had happened. The stranger was a mere beggar, one of those types whom I have described in a former chapter when writing about the modern *Cour des Miracles* of Paris. He had introduced himself to Daudet as a man of letters who had fallen into utter destitution. "He spoke of his starving family, his poor children, *toute la lyre*. I did not like his looks. Starving geniuses are not dressed in the height of fashion. But there was the chance that his story might be true, and you know how I compassionate the poor. So I gave him a louis and told him that if he was an honest man he would keep his word and pay it back. He then said that a louis was of no use to him and he clenched his fist and bent over me threateningly. Ah! mais! that changed the

question. I always have a loaded revolver in this drawer, for I receive strange visitors sometimes—thanks to my mania for not refusing my door to anybody ; I pulled it out, and then you came in. To think, mon pauvre Sherard, that you have been sitting in that ante-chamber all this while.”

On another occasion, while I was writing my notes in Daudet's company, the valet brought in a card. It was that of an author who at that time was well known in Paris. Daudet told the valet to admit him. While the two men were talking I went on with my notes. They conversed in whispers. Daudet was sitting at his desk facing me, the visitor was bending over the table speaking into his ear. After a while, glancing up, I saw a strange expression on Daudet's face, which, as I watched it, grew more and more marked. At last he caught my eye. I understood his meaning, and I got up and rang the bell. The valet entered, and he and I then walked up to the table and stood close by the visitor. Daudet said, “ Well, my dear ——, that is agreed upon. But it can't be done to-day, because, as you see, I have a visitor. To-morrow we will talk it over once more.” The man did not seem satisfied, but, after a short hesitation he took his leave. When he had gone, Daudet said, “ You have witnessed an unusual thing. Poor —— went mad before your eyes. He was quite sane when he came into the room. He was telling me something quite rational. After a while he began to talk nonsense, and in the end suggested that we should both kill ourselves *hic et nunc*, in order, as far as I could make out, to enter upon immediate immortality. I am glad you were in the room, for when men get taken that way there is no saying what they may do.”

During my absence from Paris, after all my notes for



*My First Voyage* had been taken, although the business details of the publication of the book caused him and me, owing to the bad faith of certain people, some anxiety and annoyance, we remained in friendly correspondence. I received many very kind and precious letters from him. One of his letters showed him in the light of a good business man. It was one he wrote me after some fresh annoyance had been caused to him by the people I refer to. He added, as to the manuscript which I was to produce from the notes of our conversation, "You remember that, as we found that the incidents which I told you were too few to make a book, you were to write the introductory and concluding chapters. However, I shan't worry you. You are quite free to do with it as you think fit. I must remind you, however, that when I rewrite my story alone in French, in which version you will be left out, and which will only have the most distant resemblance to the English narrative, your name won't figure on the book, and you will not have one *sou* to receive. That has always been clearly understood between us. *A vous cordialement, grand fou,* Alphonse Daudet."

There must have been one moment when the annoyance caused by the bad faith of others irritated him against me, for some time after his death, picking up by hazard one of the volumes which were published after his death, and in writing which he had been engaged at the time to which I refer, I came across a few lines in which he had sketched my portrait, giving certain details that did not allow of any mistake of the identity of the character, and I could see that at the moment when he wrote those lines he wanted to give me a mild chastisement. However, the mood must soon have passed.

I did not see him again until December 9, 1897, when

I called upon him in his new house in the Rue de l'Université. It was a magnificent apartment on the first floor, and the windows of his study looked out on one of those fine private parks which are still to be found in the Faubourg St. Germain. He was very happy in his new home. We spent a long and memorable hour together. After his reference to Zola and the absolute indifference with which Zola's *Paris* and his own *Soutien de Famille* were being received, he went on to speak about this latter work. He said, "I want you to draw as wide attention as possible to the fact that the first incidents in this story of mine are taken from life. It is a particular service I ask of you, for I am acting here in the *rôle* of a justiciary. All that about the suicide of the workman because he was to be turned out of his house for non-payment of rent, the distress of his wife, and the wretched position of his sons is fact. It is one of the little tragedies of Paris which occurred under my own eyes. The landlord of the house in question was Faure, now President of the Republic, but at that time Under-Secretary of State. When I had heard of the suicide of the poor man, who was a humble but cherished friend of mine, I took the two little orphan sons of his by the hand and rushed straight off to Faure's house. I can see myself now standing in his hall, with the two lads sobbing bitterly, clinging to my hands, the lackeys looking on with a contemptuous stare. I had sent my name in to Faure, and had been told that Monsieur the Under-Secretary was dining, and could not be disturbed. I said that nothing would drive me from where we stood until I had seen him. Presently Faure came out through one of the doors which opened on to that vestibule. He was in evening dress, and carried his napkin in his hand. I presented the two weeping lads to him, and I told him that his harshness had made them

orphans. He expressed great distress to hear of the dreadful thing that had happened, and promised that he would do all in his power to make amends. He said that he was in no way to blame for the threats which had been made to his unfortunate tenant, that all that had been done by his mother-in-law's steward, as the house was one which that lady had given to him as part of his wife's dowry—and so on. I warned him that I should not be satisfied until he had made reparation as far as possible for what had happened, and as I flung out of the house, I remember crying out, 'The writer will never forget' (*Le romancier n'oubliera jamais*). He did do a little for the boys. He recommended them for scholarships at one of the schools. But that cost him nothing, and it was not sufficient reparation. I told him that I should not forget, and I am now keeping my promise. And I want you to help me to make the facts known as widely as possible."

We then talked of other things. I never found him more friendly, displaying a kinder interest in me. He said that he was glad to hear that I was staying at the Hôtel Voltaire on the Quai Voltaire. He then told me that as soon as the family was quite settled in the house, in a few days, I must come and dine with him. "Just wait till I give you a sign," he said. Then he handed me the sandalwood box which always stood on his table, and said, "You are not smoking; take a cigarette." I opened the box. There was only one left. "Ought one to take a man's last cigarette?" I said, and added, "It is a question which has often occupied my mind." While I was saying this I was lighting the *papelito*. He laughed at my little pleasantry and said, "Question and answer in one breath! The philosophers do no other thing than that." It was indeed the last cigarette.

When I had returned to my hotel it occurred to me that, having come over to Paris merely for the purpose of hard work, I had not brought with me a dress shirt suitable to wear at a dinner in the Faubourg St. Germain and at such a table. That same afternoon I bought one. It was procured for a banquet ; it served for a funeral. No man more than Daudet, in whose literary temperament was the Hans Andersen fibre also, would have appreciated the cruel irony of this incident.

A week later, towards seven in the evening, I was returning home from the house of Professor Richer in the Rue de l'Université. I had been to see this distinguished savant, to hear from him some particulars about a new flying machine or aeroplane which he had invented and with which he had recently been experimenting in the South of France. My head was full of the wonderful things that I had heard. When I reached the Rue du Bac, my way home would have taken me to the right up this street and so to Montmartre over the bridge. But I found myself continuing along the Rue de l'Université. A sudden impulse had come upon me to go on to No. 41, and to ask to see Alphonse Daudet. It was an unreasonable proposal. The hour was late. He had himself told me at our last meeting to wait till he made a sign. But I went on. I reached No. 41. I took hold of the bell-pull of the house. Then, suddenly, my impulse left me. I relaxed my grasp. I turned round on my heel and walked back up the Rue de l'Université, reached the Rue du Bac, and went home. Near the corner of the Rue du Bac I had noticed the hour by a clock in the shop of a wine dealer. It was some minutes past seven. The next morning on opening my *Figaro* in bed, I saw the news that Alphonse Daudet was dead. From what I afterwards learned it must have been almost at the very

minute that I had my hand on the bell-pull at his door that he fell forward dying on his dining table.

Like Zola, his old friend and comrade-in-arms, he was standing erect when the blow came that felled him to the earth. No death was worthier of either of these men. They had been sturdy and valiant fighters all their lives, and fighting still they died as they had lived.



## INDEX

### A

- Academy, French, 317  
 Adam, Madame Juliette, 375  
 „ Paul, 393, 394  
 Alexander, King of Servia, 244  
 „ Tzar, 238, 342  
 Alfonso, King of Spain, 11  
 Allorto, 24, 229, 231  
 Américain, Café, 244  
 Andernach, Lords of, 109  
 Archer, Francis, 118  
 Aristophanes, 384  
 Arsonval, d', Doctor, 197-200, 202-4  
 Arton, 149  
 Astor, John Jacob, 313, 314  
 Aubert, Joseph, 26 *et seq.*, 173, 383  
 „ Madame, 280  
 Aubertin, 220  
 Augier, Emile, 114  
 Aumale, Duc d', 135, 329  
 Aurevilly, Barbey d', 458-60

### B

- Bacon, 261, 263, 329  
 Balfour, David, 374  
 Ball, Professor, 57  
 Baltard, 106  
 Balzac, 56, 91, 94, 459, 460  
 Barnato, Barney, 294  
 Barr, Robert, 180  
 Barrés, Maurice, 393  
 Barrymore, Maurice, 330  
 Bashkirtsheff, Marie, 63  
 Baudelaire, Charles, 358

- Beaconsfield, Lord, 347  
 Beers, Jan van, 341  
*Bel-Ami*, Original of, 60  
 Belgians, Queen of, 345  
 Bell, Sir Lowthian, 171  
 Belloc, Hilaire, 114  
 „ Marie Lowndes, 115  
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 53, 54, 116, 330,  
 331, 332  
 Besant, Sir Walter, 466  
 Bibi-la-Purée, 32, 81, 82, 385  
 Bismarck, 107, 109, 110  
 Blaine, James G., 257, 259, 260-4, 30c  
 Blake, William, 232  
 Blanche, Doctor, 58, 64  
 Blowitz, 276, 319  
 Boer, de, 195  
 Bois-Cervoise, 220, 221  
 Bonaparte, Princess Pierre, 131  
 „ Prince Roland, 131  
 Bonnemain, Madame de, 288  
 Bonvin, 326, 327  
 Boothby, Guy, 181  
 Bouguereau, 344  
 „ Willy, 344  
 Boulanger, General, 108, 248, 254,  
 256, 267, 268, 275, 277-80, 282,  
 284-9, 311, 329  
 Bourgeois, Léon, 221  
 Bourget, Paul, 120, 376, 415  
*Bovary, Madame*, 55, 429  
 Breck, Alan Stuart, 374  
 Breteuil, Marquis de, 294  
 Breton, Courbevoie murderer, 278  
 Brillat-Savarin, 302

Brisson, 276  
 Bristol Hotel, 294  
 Brown-Sequard, 197, 198, 202  
 Brugère, General, 265, 266  
 Bullier, Bal, 243  
 Buloz, 119

## C

*Camélias, Dame aux*, 54  
 Capbreton, 308  
 Carlyle, 415, 438  
 Carnegie, 185  
 Carnot, 23, 45, 223, 228, 237, 238,  
 250, 251, 253, 256, 257, 258, 264,  
 265-9, 284  
 Carnot, Madame, 191, 256, 258  
 Caserio, 269  
 Casimir-Perier, 270, 276  
 Cassagnac, G. de, 273  
 „ Paul de, 108, 369  
 Cassation, Court of, 49  
 Cassigneul, 360  
 Castelin, Andre, 280  
 Cayenne, Convict settlement at, 42  
 Cazin, 327, 341  
 Celsing, Chamberlain von, 247  
 Chabanne, Henri, 43  
 Champion, Honoré, 119, 324  
 Champsaur, Felicien, 319  
 Chatterton, 384  
 Chaville, 111  
 Chénais, Madame, 2, 3  
 Chesterfield, Lord, 124  
 Chevreul, Eugène, 302  
 Child, Theodore, 319  
 Chincholle, 287  
 Christophle, 129, 141  
 Cibber, Colley, 124  
 Claretie, Jules, 329  
 Clarke, Sir Campbell, 319  
 Clémenceau, Albert, 271  
 „ 350, 366  
 Clementine, Princess, 246  
 Cleveland, 237  
 Clinchamps, Comtesse de, 135  
 Columbus, 144

Connaught, Duke of, 342  
 Considérant, Victor, 379  
 Constans, 288, 290-2  
 Cook, E. T., 318  
 Copello, Cavaliere, 178, 179, 183  
 Coppée, François, 84, 87, 298, 323  
 Coquelin, *ainé*, 330, 340, 341  
 „ cadet, 306, 324, 326, 327,  
 331, 335  
 „ Family, The, 328  
 „ Madame, 327  
 Cornu, Maxime, 196  
 Courvoisier, 32  
 Crawford, Marion, 386  
 Criminal Appeal, Court of, 48  
 Cust, H., 318

## D

*Daily Graphic, The*, 318, 467  
 Damés, 33  
 Danton, 285  
 Darzens, 380, 381  
 Daudet, Alphonse, 4, 6, 27, 54, 118,  
 120, 216, 217, 240, 377, 378, 388,  
 414, 447, 473-5, 484-92  
 Daudet, Léon, 15  
 „ Madame Léon, 376  
 Daumier, 76  
 Degas, 341  
 Deibler, 24, 194, 195  
 Delahaef, 33  
 Depew, Chauncey, 190  
*De Profundis*, 417-23, 429  
 Déroulède, Paul, 114, 115  
 Deschamps, 385  
 Desmoulins, Camille, 285  
 Detaille, 341-3  
 Devil's Island, The, 43  
 Dodd, Dr., 351  
 Donnelly, Ignatius, 213, 261, 329  
 Dowson, Ernest, 397-412, 437  
 Dieulafoy, Madame, 376  
 Dostoïewski, Fedor, 90  
 Doughty, Miss, 25  
 Dreyfus, Camille, 293  
 „ Captain, 43, 440, 471-84

Drouet, Madame Juliette, 9  
 Drumont, 369  
 Dubois, Marguerite, 32, 35, 42  
 Dugnot, Joseph, 186, 299, 301  
 Dumas, Alexandre, 14, 66, 78, 319,  
   324, 325  
 Dumas, *fils*, 19, 52, 53, 70, 96, 388  
 Dupoirrier, 456  
 Duval, 234

## E

Ebner, 485  
 Edison, 172, 174-6, 178-94  
   " Mrs., 179, 183, 188, 191  
 Eiffel, 129, 165, 166, 168-71, 173, 184,  
   191  
 Elizabeth, Queen, 269  
 Elysée, Palace, 45  
 Epiphanes Antiochus, 205  
 Escoffier, 365  
 Esterhazy, 270, 440, 441  
 Eugenie, Empress, 104, 110, 111, 257  
 Ewart, Senator, 264

## F

Fairbairn, 171  
 Fallières, 258, 265, 266, 267  
 Faure, Felix, 46, 276, 277, 489  
 Fenayrou, *L'Affaire*, 19, 51  
 Fenine, 90, 92, 93, 95  
 Ferry, Jules, 220, 221, 267, 268, 287  
 Feuillet, Octave, 257  
*Figaro, Le*, 98, 358, 364  
 Flaubert, 55, 429  
 Flers, Marquis de, 270, 271  
 Floquet, 91, 284, 286, 287  
 Fontainebleau, 45  
 Forbes, 171  
 Francis, Don, of Spain, 11, 12, 240,  
   241, 242  
 François Ier., 256  
 Friant, 341

## G

Gambetta, 329  
 Gamp, Mrs., 320

Gavarni, 76  
 Germany, Emperor of, 183  
 Gervaise, 65  
 Gide, André, 429, 432, 433, 441  
 Girardin, Emile de, 325, 367  
 Git-le-Cœur, Rue, 117  
 Gladstone, 189, 264  
   " Mrs., 189  
 Goethe, 105, 448  
 Goncourt, Edmond de, 240  
   " Jules de, 240  
 Gontaut-Biron, Comtesse de, 151  
 Gounod, 338, 345  
 Gourand, Colonel, 178, 180, 188  
 Grangey, Baron de, 271  
 Grassal, George. *See* Rebell, Hugues  
 "Gratias, Papa," 45  
 Grave, Jean, 465  
 Greece, King of, 88  
 Grein, 467  
 Grévy, President, 16, 45, 135, 223,  
   257, 258, 266, 268  
 "Grimm, Thomas," 365  
 Gringoire, 82  
 Groetzinger, Madame, 50  
 Grub, Mr. Bugg, 264  
 Guizot, 212  
 Guyot, Yves, 366

## H

Halévy, Ludovic, 325  
 Harland, Henry, 118  
 Harmsworth, Sir Alfred, 318  
 Harris, Phœbe, 372  
 Hartmann, 57  
 Haussmann, Baron, 102-4, 108, 111,  
   113-6  
 Hauteville House, 1, 2, 3  
 Havard, 106  
 Haweis, 212  
 Hearst, W. T., 476, 480, 483  
 Hedin Sven, 304  
 Henner, 344  
 Henri III., 418  
 Hérédia, De, 394  
 Hérissou, Comte d', 272

Herz, Cornelius, 149  
 Hirsch, Baron, 294  
 Hoffmann, Louis von, 293  
 Houssaye, Arsène, 68  
 Hugo, Jeanne, 10, 15, 376  
 " Sigisbert, 13  
 " Victor, 1, 2 *et seq.*, 16, 47, 52,  
 80, 362  
 Hugues, Madame Clovis, 18

## I

Ibsen, 58, 247  
 Irving, Sir Henry, 339, 340  
 Isabella, Queen, 240  
 Izycki, Wladislas, 86, 87, 89

## J

Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 47, 124  
 Joseph. *See* Dugnot, Joseph  
 " Boulanger's page-boy, 279,  
 281  
 Joseph-Renaud, 327, 392, 441  
 Joubert, 195, 196  
 Jourdain, Coupe-Tête, 276  
*Journal, Le*, References to, 42  
 Jouy, Jules, 226, 227, 230, 232

## K

Karr, Alphonse, 78  
 Keats, 63, 308  
 Kemmler, 194-6, 202  
 Kennedy, Bart, 223  
 Kessler, Count, 131, 132  
 " Countess, 132, 352  
 Kidgerbury, Mrs., 242  
 King Edward VII., 342  
 Kock, Paul de, 14  
 Krupp, 189

## L

Lacenaire, 32  
 La Chesnaye, 146, 163  
 Lacoste, Mother, 309  
 La Jeunesse, Ernest, 438-44, 459

Launcey, Provost de, 357  
 Laurent, Charles, 366  
 Lazare, Bernard, 43  
 Leclerc, René, 27, 358, 383, 384  
 Le Clere, Victor, 214  
 Lefévre, Madame, 255  
 Leipsic, 111  
 Lemaître, 335  
 Leopold, King, of Belgium, 245  
 Leroux, Hugues, 484  
 Lespés, Léo, 365  
 Lesseps, Charles de, 137, 143, 151,  
 152, 153, 158, 162  
 Lesseps, Ferdinand de, 121-65, 216, 354  
 " Guiselle de, 152, 159  
 " Hélène de, 158, 159, 160, 163  
 " Ismail de, 139, 151  
 " Lolo de, 151, 159  
 " Madame de, 134, 137, 138,  
 140, 141, 147-51, 153, 158, 160-3  
 Lesseps, Matthew de, 151, 153  
 " Paul de, 151, 159  
 " Robert de, 159  
 " Solange de, 159  
 " Zi-Zi de, 151, 152, 153, 159  
 Lichtenstein, Colonel, 265  
 Lienard, Marguerite, 75-7  
 Li-Hung-Tchang, 304  
 Lisbonne, Maxime, 225, 226  
 Liszt, 336  
 Lockroy, Madame, 52  
 Logerot, General, 258, 267, 268  
 Lombroso, 27, 30  
 Loti, Pierre, 376  
 Loubet, President, 18, 46, 51, 258, 267  
 Louis, Doctor, 396  
 " XI., 82  
 " XIV., 329  
 " XVI., 276  
 " Philippe, 76  
 Louys, Pierre, 393, 394, 395, 396  
 Luffey, *alias* Luftus Riley, 292

## M

Macdonnell, J. de Courcy, 245  
 Mackay, Mrs., 352

- McLane, 260  
 MacMahon, Marshal, 248, 249, 250,  
     257, 277  
 Madeleine, Jacques, 380, 381  
 Maeterlinck, Maurice, 323  
 Magnard, Editor of *Le Figaro*, 131-3,  
     363, 364, 371, 469  
 Mahaffy, 212  
 Malet, Sir Edward, 130  
 Mallarmé, Stéphane, 387, 390, 391  
 Maquet, Auguste, 324, 325  
 Marchesi, Madame, 345  
 Marie, Adrien, 250, 252, 254, 255  
 Marie-Antoinette, 240  
 Marinoni, 361  
     ,, Madame, 361  
 Markets, Central, 106  
 Marlowe, 118, 262  
 Martyrs, Café des, 355  
 Massenet, Jules, 336-8  
 Mathilde, Princesse, 297  
 Matthews, Charles, 223  
 Maupassant, Guy de, 14, 55-60, 67,  
     157, 216, 228  
 Mazarin, 214  
 Medicis, Catherine de, 135  
 Meissonier, 352  
 Melba, 132, 345, 346  
 Mendés, Catulle, 380  
     ,, Raphael, 381  
 Meredith, George, 459  
 Mermeix-Terrail, 367  
 Merrill, Stuart, 392  
 Metternich, 67  
     ,, Madame de, 110, 111  
 Meyer, Arthur, 254, 255, 352  
 Michel, Louise, 218, 222, 224, 227,  
     231, 232  
 Michelet, Quotation from, Note to, 348  
 Mikhael, Ephraim, 380  
 Milan, of Servia, 243  
 Mimaut, Mlle., 151  
 Miracles, Cour des, 100  
 Molière, 268, 276, 329  
 Montépin, Xavier de, 360  
 Moore, George, 470, 471  
 Moréas, Jean, 379, 380, 390, 392, 394  
 Morés, Marquis de, 288, 290, 293,  
     294, 381  
 Morés, Marquise de, 293  
 Morin, 18  
 Mounet, Paul, 340  
     ,, Sully, 339, 340  
 Morton, Mr., 260  
 Mun, Comte de, 294  
 Munkaczy, 341  
 Murat, Prince, 296, 297, 298  
     ,, Princess, 297  
 Murger, Henry, 378, 383  
 Musset, Alfred de, 112
- N
- Napoleon I., 6, 249, 272, 460  
     ,, III., 13, 103, 104, 106, 109,  
     111, 241, 257  
 Natalie, Queen, 244  
 Nemours, Duc de, 74  
 Nerval, Gerard de, 115, 120  
*New York Herald, The*, 312  
*New York Times, The*, 335  
 Ney, Marshal, 297  
 Nittis de, 69, 341  
*Notre Dame de Paris*, Hugo's, 4
- O
- Ohnet, George, 335, 336  
 Oliphant, Laurence, 389  
 Orleans, Duc d', 112  
     ,, Prince Henri d', 270, 271  
 Oscar, King of Sweden, 247  
 Ouida, 87
- P
- Pailleron, Maxime, 119  
*Pall Mall Gazette, The*, 318, 467  
 Palmerston, 264  
 Pasteur, 266  
 Pearl, Cora, 232-4  
 Pedro, Dom, 140, 242  
 Pélouze, Madame, 135  
 Pène, Henri de, 368  
 Peters, W. T., 392



*Petit Journal, Le*, 361  
 Pierre, Father, 152  
 Pizarros, The, 341  
 Poe, Edgar Allan, 382  
 Poitiers, Diane de, 135  
 Poincaré, 351  
 Ponchon, Raoul, 393  
 Porter, General Horace, 341  
 Prado, 18  
 Prince, a prisoner, 428  
 Prinet, 162  
 Pulitzer, Albert, 243  
     "    Joseph, 249, 306

Q

Queensberry, Marquis of, 301  
 Quincey, De, 29

R

Racine, 94  
 Raffaelli, 76  
 Ranc, 367  
 Rattazzi, 178  
 Reade, Charles, 212  
 Rebell, Hugues, 63, 386-90  
 Régnier, Henri de, 393, 394, 396  
 Reichemberg, Mlle., 329  
 Reid, Whitelaw, 264  
 Reinach, Baron de, 149  
     "    Joseph, 268, 369  
 Renan, 154, 156, 204, 207, 211-6, 218,  
     388  
 Ressmann, 161  
 Richaud, 290  
 Richebourg, Emile, 361  
 Richepin, 53, 54  
 Richer, Professor, 491  
 Ritt, 345  
 Robert, Henri, 20, 26  
 Robespierre, 285  
 Rochefort, Henri, 75, 114, 218, 221,  
     267, 268, 356, 369, 370  
 Rochefoucauld, 178  
 Rollinat, 118, 382, 398  
 Roosevelt, President, 192  
 Roquette, La, 47

Rothschild, Nathan de, Baronne, 326  
 Rougon-Macquarts, The, 119  
*Round the World in Eighty Days*, 314  
 Rudolph, Prince, 345

## S

Sadowa, 110  
 Sainte-Croix, C. de, 356  
 St. Simon, 276  
 Salis, Abbé, 81  
 Sandringham, Music mistress at, 307  
 Sardou, Victorien, 53, 330  
 Saussier, General, 134  
 Schinderhannes, 194  
 Schneider, Hortense, 78, 241  
     "    Minister, 241  
 Scholl, Aurélien, 325, 362, 371, 374, 375.  
 Schopenhauer, 57-9  
 Schwob, Marcel, 386  
 Sellier, 24, 229  
 Sénat, Hugo's dog, 2, 3  
*Serres Chaudes Les*, 323  
 Severine, Mme., 35  
 Seigné, Marquise de, 120  
 Shakespeare, 261  
 Siemens, Dr., 189  
 Sienkiewicz, H., 90  
 Singh, Prince Dhuleep, 252  
 Socrates, 384  
 Sorel, Agnes, 147, 161  
 Stanhope, 245  
 Stead, W. T., 318, 467  
 Stevens, 341  
 Stevenson, R. L., 374, 386, 387  
 Strong, Rowland, 440, 441  
 Sue, Eugene, 362  
 Sweden, King of, 247, 248, Note to,  
     452  
 Sweden, Queen of, 246, 247  
 Swinburne, 9, 56  
 Sylvain, Café, 243

## T

Tacitus, 209  
 Tailhade, Laurent, 386  
 Taine, Hippolyte, 7, 8, 66, 67

Talleyrand, 67  
 Tcheng-Ki-Tong, 303, 304  
*Temps, Le*, 112  
*Terre, La*, 22  
 Thackeray, 363  
 Thibaud, Anatole, 119  
 Thiers, M., 85, 113, 350  
 Thurtell, 32  
 Tichborne Case, 81  
 Tirard, 191, 269  
 Tissandier, 381  
*Tout-Paris, Le*, 100  
 Trans-Siberian Railway, 315  
*Travailleurs de la Mer, Les*, 4, 5  
 "Trimm, Timothy," 365  
*Trois Mousquetaires, Les*, 324, 325  
 Turner, 326

U

Ungern-Sternberg, Isabelle, Baroness  
 of, Note to, 420  
 Uzès, Duchess d', 253, 254, 367

V

Vacquerie, Auguste, 3, 8-12, 369, 370  
 Valentin-le-Desossé, 303  
 Vanderbilt, W. K., 299-301, 343  
 Varrila, Bunaud, 134  
 Veau Qui Tette, Le, Tavern of, 115  
 Verlaine, 82-4, 383-5  
 Verne, Jules, 67, 314-6  
 „ Michel, 316  
 Versailles, Jury of, 51  
*Vicomte de Bragelonne, Le*, 324  
 Victoria, Queen, 10, 161, 233, 252  
 Vieille Lanterne, Rue de la, 115

Villemessant, De, 98, 358, 363, 364  
 Villon, 81, 82  
 Vizetelly, 466, 467, 471  
 Volders, Jean, 245  
 Voltaire, 82

## W

Waldeck-Rousseau, 276  
 Wales, Prince of, 75  
 Watkin, Sir Edward, 171, 172  
 Weare, William, 32  
 Westinghouse, 184  
*Westminster Gazette, The*, 318  
 Whistler, 327, 346-9  
 Whiteing, Richard, 319  
 Whitney, Secretary, 264  
 Wilde, Oscar, 9, 10, 346, 347, 382,  
 386, 390, 392, 412-64, 466  
 William, Emperor, 238, 299, 300  
 Williams, Commissioner, 192  
 Wilson, Daniel, 135, 136, 223  
 Winter, of the *New York Tribune*, 340  
 Wolff, 352, 365  
 Wordsworth, 105, 380

## X

Xau, Fernand, 371, 469

## Y

Yellow Journalism, The, 308

## Z

Zola, 4, 7, 22, 32, 56, 68, 119, 217,  
 234, 270, 311, 350, 364, 371, 374,  
 414, 463-92





University of California  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY  
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388

Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

---

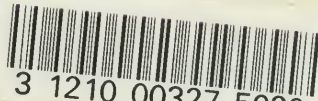


DC338 35x 1905  
Sherard, Robert Harborough,  
1861-  
Twenty years in Paris;

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**AA** 001 339 348 3



3 1210 00327 5920

